Portrait of Time

Sea Drift

Elizabeth Bartlett

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Books of Poetry by

Elizabeth Bartlett

Poems of Yes and No, 1952

Behold This Dreamer, 1959

Poetry Concerto, 1961

It Takes Practice Not to Die, 1964

Threads, 1968

Twelve-tone Poems, 1968

Selected Poems, 1970

The House of Sleep, 1975

In Search of Identity, 1977

Dialogue of Dust (a one-act play in verse), 1977

A Zodiac of Poems, 1979

Address in Time, 1979

Memory Is No Stranger, 1981

The Gemini Poems, 1984

Candles, 1987, 1988

Around the Clock, 1989

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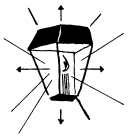

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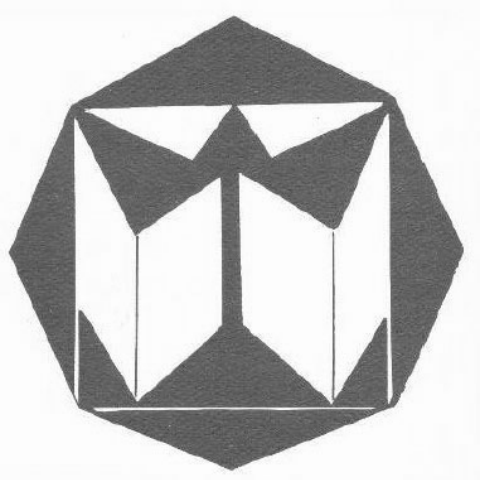
Portrait of Time

Sea Drift

A facsimile of the original manuscript



by

Elizabeth Bartlett

Foreword by

Steven James Bartlett

AUTOGRAPH EDITIONS

FOREWORD

Steven James Bartlett

American poet Elizabeth Bartlett (1911–1994) possessed an exceptional memory. As her son, I was astonished even when I was a child how vividly and in great detail she was able to recall events, people, conversations, and experiences from many years ago. As an adult, I came to recognize that her memories did not involve purely factual occurrences, but laced through them were also her thoughts and feelings she had experienced at the time, often long ago. In *Portrait of Time: Sea Drift*, Elizabeth Bartlett's sensitive and prodigious memory creates a richly elaborated recapturing of a remembered childhood of a kind seldom found in autobiographies.

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When Elizabeth Bartlett died, she left behind an enormous collection of her literary papers and correspondence, copies of her many publications of poetry, short stories, essays, literary criticism, translations, and book reviews; as yet unpublished manuscripts; as well as original award-winning works of art in a variety of media, including scratchboard, brush and ink, pen drawings, wax painting, cut paper, and collage. As her literary executor, it fell to me to place these works in permanent collections, which are now to be found in the Archive for New Poetry maintained by the Mandeville Department of Special Collections at the University of California, San Diego, and in the Rare Books Archives and Special Collections of the University of Louisville.

In addition to these materials, I put aside for my personal reference and enjoyment a number of her manuscripts not published previously. During the more than 30 years that have passed since then, one book manuscript in particular has frequently drawn me back to it. It stands apart from the work for which Elizabeth Bartlett became well-known, i.e., her poetry, her creation of the twelve-tone form, and the establishment by her of the international non-profit organization Literary Olympics, Inc., whose purpose is to honor and award celebrated poets in juried international competitions coinciding with the Summer Olympic Games.

The unpublished manuscript to which I've returned again and again is *Portrait of Time*. The copy in my possession, as far as I am able to verify, may be the only one in existence. The book is distinctive in a variety of ways: First, it is an autobiographical account, yet is told in the third person, and in an unusual way that I'll describe. Second, it is a recreation through Elizabeth Bartlett's remarkable memory of her childhood in the New York City of long ago. The book spans the time when her earliest memories were formed, until her late childhood, at about the age of 12. Third, the book is innovative in its style, portrayed through the eyes and by means of the language of the child she once was, recreating a sensitive and original mind with the vibrancy of remembered

experience. Fourth, for an autobiographical account of a childhood, the book is long. The manuscript that is now before me on my desk consists of some 550 typed pages or more than 205,000 words. I will add a few notes later about the manuscript itself.

During my childhood, my mother and my father, who was also an author and artist, would often share with one another and me their literary work in progress. In the evenings, my mother frequently would read aloud to my father and me from her poetry, from her short stories, and from my father's works of fiction and non-fiction. She was an inspiring and dramatic reader who brought to our ears not only her own and my father's writing, but also numerous short stories and full-length novels by other authors. These were days without the intrusion and distraction of television; instead, our family of three explored the world of literature.

Sometimes, though very seldom, with years in between, my mother would mention in passing that she was once again re-working her manuscript of *Portrait of Time: Sea Drift*. She may have begun writing the book before I was born. If my memory is not mistaken, she first had the title *Heresy in Steel* in mind, which my father and I liked very much. If this was the book's initial title, when and why she changed it, I do not know.

As I've mentioned, *Portrait of Time* is autobiographical yet written in the third person. This is uncommon among autobiographies, but is not unknown. Among poets, in India the widely known Tamil poet Muthiah Sathappan Chettiar (1927-1981), most often known as Kannadasan, also employed this approach in recalling his early life in one short chapter, "My Childhood," in his *Gnana Maalika* (*Garland of Wisdom*, 1971). Also born in India, Urdu Hindi poet Nida Fazli (1938–2016) wrote his 2005 autobiography in the third person, *Deewaron Ke Beech* (*Between the Walls*), Volume 1, and *Deewaron Ke Behar* (*Beyond the Walls*), Volume 2.

Among other authors whose autobiographies avoided use of the first person "I," there is Salvador Dali's *The Secret Life of Salvador Dali* (1942), in which he refers to himself as "Salvador Dali"; Henry Adams' *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907), in which he similarly refers to himself by his name; and Gertrude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), written in the first person as though by Alice B. Toklas.

Elizabeth Bartlett's *Portrait of Time*, however, makes use of a different variety of third person narration: Although the book begins with a straightforward autobiographical "I," it quickly shifts to third person by investing the author's identity in the character she calls "Beatrice Berger." Other members of her family, friends, and neighbors are also renamed. Why she chose to do this, I never learned and can only conjecture. Perhaps, as Oscar Wilde once remarked, "Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth" (in his essay "The Critic as Artist," 1891).

Alternatively and more poetically, when looking into the mirror of memories, what one sees is oneself as another. When one looks in an everyday mirror, the image is not as others see one, but the image is of course reversed: If you part your hair on the left, others do not see you as you see yourself; for them to see you as you do in the mirror, your part would need to be on the right. Somewhat in parallel, when you remember your past, the you whom you remember is from the perspective of you today, who is in some respects, perhaps important ones, no longer the person you were. A remembered self is, so to speak, a self mirrored back in the form of memories; they portray someone as another

than the person you are now. If one wished and if it serves an author's literary purpose, that person might be given a different name. Perhaps something like this may have been Elizabeth Bartlett's purpose. She had a complex and reflective mind.

Or the name changes we find in *Portrait of Time* may reflect the emotional distance that its author may have gained, permitting her to offer a narration as though by an external observer. Or perhaps, we could further conjecture, the style she chose may have provided a greater narrative distance to introduce some elements of fiction, a distance from her real identity at the time she wrote.

Given these alternatives and others that are possible, it is not clear whether *Portrait of Time* is wholly a non-fiction autobiography, or is what has become known as an autobiographical novel or fictive memoir that blurs the line between fact and fiction, or is an experiment with so-called depersonalized self-narration (as in Gertrude Stein's, *Everybody's Autobiography*, 1937).

Whatever Elizabeth Bartlett's motivation, *Portrait of Time* portrays, as a phenomenologist might express this, the life-world of a child in the New York City of the second decade of the 1900s. The chief interest of the work may lie in the insight it offers into the character and childhood of Elizabeth Bartlett as a poet, in its richly detailed descriptions of childhood from her point of view as a child, and in its descriptions from a perceptive and sensitive young person's point of view of tenement life in the New York City of more than a century ago.

Many of the experiences, people, and events recounted in *Portrait of Time* are, I believe, not fictitious, but factually based. My mother would occasionally recount to me many of her memories of the very same experiences, people, and events. These independent, repeated, and confirming recollections are, for most us, then commonly judged to refer to real events and people, rather than fictions. Beyond this belief, what I can attest with certainty is that she lived a life in the service of beauty and of truth as she knew it.

About the manuscript

A facsimile of a manuscript seeks to replicate the source material as accurately as possible in terms of the appearance, scale, condition, and pagination of the original. Following this Foreword, readers will find a facsimile of the manuscript of Elizabeth Bartlett's *Portrait of Time*, which reproduces its pagination, including the author's occasional annotations, corrections, and hand-drawn diagrams. The manuscript was typed on standard-size 8½ x 11 paper, but the typescript is not the top copy, but rather a carbon copy on gossamer-thin, extremely lightweight, and now very fragile onionskin paper. I have no knowledge of what happened to the top copy or why my mother remained in possession of only the carbon copy. As a carbon copy, it is generally quite readable, but the passage of time, the yellowing of the paper, and its translucency have made the reproduction of a facsimile a challenge.

This manuscript was bound in leather with cloth-tipped corners. The binding was, as I remember, done as a gift to my mother from my father during one of the periods when

they lived in Mexico. I cannot provide a date, but the manuscript was certainly bound more than fifty years ago. The fact that it was bound as a gift for my mother and that, as I remember, she was pleased made clear that she valued its contents and saw the binding as a way of preserving the work.

Why did I choose to publish a facsimile of the manuscript itself rather than create a standard modern typeset equivalent text? There are several reasons: First, as one who is dedicated to the conservation of literary works, I wished to reproduce as far as possible the original typescript; it is perhaps, as I've said, the only copy of the book in existence. Second, readers may share my experience that having a facsimile of the original typescript before their eyes brings them into closer contact with its author who sat in thought typing for many long hours at a machine that is now a collector's item. Third, there is my own practical reason: the realistic expedience which the inevitability of aging with the passage of time brings with it. Now in my 80s and with some of my own writing projects still to care for, offering a facsimile of the original manuscript was a realizable project that I could complete within a limited period of time. Here, I trust the reader will forgive the need to bow to the forces of time which one does one's best to ignore, but in the end, alas, cannot.

It is my hope that *Portrait of Time: Sea Drift* will find its way into the hands of interested readers, lovers and students of Elizabeth Bartlett's poetry, and scholars, historians, and literary critics wishing to know more of her life and thought, and of a child's experience growing up in New York City more than a century ago. I further hope, through the efforts of others dedicated to the task, that a standard typeset edition will someday be published. The licensing for this facsimile has been chosen to open the door with this end in view.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth Bartlett, c. 1962

Elizabeth Bartlett (1911-1994) was an American poet and writer noted for her lyrical and symbolic poetry, creation of the new twelve-tone form of poetry, founder of the international non-profit organization Literary Olympics, Inc., and known as an author of fiction, essays, reviews, translations, and as an editor. She is not to be confused with the British poet (1924-2008) of the same name. For more detailed information about Elizabeth Bartlett's life, work, and critical commendations, see the Wikipedia entry.

Bartlett's most notable achievements include:

- Creation of a new form of poetry, "the twelve-tone poem," adapting Arnold Schönberg's musical system to the verbal, accented sounds of language. Called "the Emily Dickinson of the 20th Century," Bartlett's concise lyrics have been praised by poets, musicians, and composers alike.

- Publication of 16 books of poetry, a group of edited anthologies, and more than 1,000 poems, short stories, and essays published, for example, in *Harper's*, *Virginia Quarterly*, *New York Times, North American Review*, *Saturday Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and in numerous international collections.

- Recipient of many fellowships, grants and awards, including NEA, PEN Syndicate, fellowships at the Huntington Hartford Foundation, Montalvo, Yaddo,

MacDowell, Dorland Mt. Colony and Ragdale, travel grants, and honors for introducing literature as part of the Olympics.

- Founder of the Literary Olympics, to restore literature, specifically poetry, as a vital part of the Olympics as it once had been in ancient Greece.

Bartlett's poetry came to the attention of leading poets, writers, and critics as diverse as Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, Mark Van Doren, Conrad Aiken, Allen Tate, Alfred Kreymborg, Robert Hillyer, Louis Untermeyer, Rolfe Humphries, John Ciardi, Richard Eberhart, Richard Wilbur, Maxine Kumin, Robert M. Hutchins, Kenneth Rexroth, William Stafford, and others. Over the years, Bartlett maintained an active and extensive correspondence with eminent poets, writers, and literary critics; evident throughout this collected literary correspondence are strong statements attesting to the importance of her work.

Her husband, Paul Alexander Bartlett (1909–1990) was an American writer, artist, and poet. He made a large-scale study through pen-and-ink illustrations and photographs of more than 350 Mexican haciendas, published novels, short stories, and poetry, and worked as a fine artist in a variety of media. For more detailed information about his life and work, see the Wikipedia entry.

Elizabeth Bartlett's son, Steven James Bartlett (1945–), is a philosopher and psychologist who has published many books and articles in the fields of philosophy and psychology. For more detailed information about his life and work, see the Wikipedia entry.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND SOURCES OF ELIZABETH BARTLETT'S WORK

At the time of this writing, an informative Wikipedia entry is available which describes Elizabeth Bartlett's life, lists her creative work, and summarizes its recognition and importance, accompanied by links to additional online resources:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_Bartlett_%28American_poet%29

A number of Elizabeth Bartlett's previously published books may now be freely downloaded in a variety of eBook formats from Project Gutenberg:

http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/author/49768

As noted earlier, extensive permanent collections of Elizabeth Bartlett's papers, literary correspondence, publications, unpublished manuscripts, and art have been established, one as part of the Archive for New Poetry maintained by the Mandeville Department of Special Collections at the University of California, San Diego (detailed finding aid), and the second by the Rare Books Archives and Special Collections of the University of Louisville (detailed finding aid).

PORTRAIT OF TIME: SEA DRIFT

by

ELIZABETH BARTLETT

PORTRAIT OF TIME

SEA DRIFT

Time was when time began, in the beginning, sitting in a rocker or playing on the bed, thinking, Yesterday, Long Ago, Now - I, Beatrice Berger, and my mama, my papa, Addie and Ben - the light slanting through the windows on her short, chubby legs and on Maisie's pretty dress that mama made.

It was a nice big bed where mama and papa slept. She liked to play on it whenever mama was busy in the kitchen or sewing on the machine and told her to play there. Her crib used to be there, against the wall, but that was Before, when she was little, like Maisie. Now she slept with Addie in one bed and Ben in the other bed, in the room at the end of the hall near the door. She didn't like her room; it wasn't nearly so nice as mama's which was big and light and had the fire-escape outside one window where they could sit and drink lemonade on very warm days. It was a pretty room with a nice dresser and a mirror which she could see when she stood up on the bed. She liked the smooth brown wood and the round buttons on the drawers that she could open. The chifferobe had the same wood too, but she couldn't pull out the heavy drawers with their big copper handles. She knew mama kept the linens and sheets in the bottom drawers and that papa kept his things in the top drawers.

Shall I tell you a story, Maisie, or shall I sing? Well, when I was as little as you - Maisie fell over and struck her head against the bed and Beatrice stopped to rub and kiss Maisie's little head, telling her it was a naughty old bed and she hit it with her hand just as mama did when she got hurt, and then Maisie felt better. But what did mama do with her nice white crib that used to be there, against the wall? She frowned and put Maisie down on the quilted bedspread and climbed down to the floor.

Mama was outside, talking with Mrs. Weaver, waiting for the dumbwaiter to send up the ice. The garbage pail had already been emptied. Beatrice stopped in the doorway to listen, watching Mrs. Weaver's face; it was a

plain, quiet face; she wasn't sure if she liked it or not. Mrs. Weaver combed her hair straight up with a big knot on top and wore two combs in the back; Beatrice didn't know why. And then, Mrs. Weaver always wore the same thing, a big striped apron which tied behind and showed her big belly. Mama was much prettier. She ran over to hug her, burying her face in mama's skirt. Mrs. Weaver smiled, showing the gold rim edging her teeth.

Did you ever see such a love-bug, mama said, but Beatrice knew that was for company because when they were alone mama didn't say such things, and she forgot about the crib, wondering why mama wanted to show her off, as though she were only making believe. She went back inside to wait until Mrs. Weaver went away.

For sometimes, when she was telling Maisie a story about when she was little, mama would help her out, because it was so long ago and she couldn't remember everything. It seemed there was no end to all that had happened since she was born. God had sent her to Dr. Rausch for mama. She knew the little black bag he had brought her in. She wondered if Dr. Rausch ever made a mistake. Supposing he had brought her to another mama. It would have been terrible. Why, she belonged to mama. Everyone said she looked just like her. It made her very, very happy to know that. She was mama's own baby, just as Maisie was hers.

And did you have a mama too, Beatrice interrupted when mama first told her about when she was a baby. Mama told her the story about Grandma Stella

who used to wheel Beatrice around in a nice black carriage. Grandma had gone away. Home, mama said. Another home? Yes, another home, far away, because Grandma had other children and grandchildren too, and mama looked very sad, making Beatrice sad too. It was hard to understand. How could that be? She and mama were always together. But mama was telling her about when she was a little girl - oh, very long ago, and far, far away - and Beatrice found it strange that mama had ever been anything else but her mama and she was a little bit jealous too. Because for as long as she could remember there had always been mama and papa and Addie and Ben and this was home.

She never tired of telling Maisie the story and Maisie never tired of listening. And if not the story, then all the songs she knew, from the very beginning to the one Addie had taught her yesterday. She knew when she left any out and went back to make it right. She would sit on the rocking chair and they would both sing together until she was tired of pushing her body back and forth to make the chair rock.

And then there was more time and something else happened, a very important big thing, even bigger and more important than anything else that had happened before that, and it took a long time and was full of many, many things and -

She had come to the bathroom door and mama was washing clothes in the bathtub, bending over the scrubbing board, perspiring, the black woolen shawl pinned around her shoulders - oh yes, she was sure of that - and then she had loosened her drawers and climbed on the seat -

MAMA! Something tore, hurt, and then mama came to look and screamed. And then mama wrapped the black shawl under her to cover the bleeding and rushed

out of the house, down the stairs and all the way to the hospital, everybody asking where she was going so fast. And then they sat a long time on a wooden bench in the waiting room and she cried on mama's neck because of the sharp smell and the pain and mama rocked her and kissed her and told her to be a good girl till the nurse came. And then suddenly the nurse took her away from mama and undressed her and put her on a moving table. Then a big man pushed her down a long hall into a tiny room which had a gate that closed and then opened into another long hall and then a different nurse put her on another white table in a room full of terrible lights and there were doctors and nurses wearing white masks -

It's all right, you can see her now. Someone's voice woke her up. She must have been sleeping; she couldn't remember. And then mama's cool, soft cheek bending over - her crib! The same white bars all around. But the room was too big to see, full of white beds and a very high ceiling. Mama was crying and kissing her, trying to make her smile. Then she saw papa standing near the door and she couldn't understand what he was doing home till she remembered she was in the hospital, sick, and it made her start to cry to see papa blow his nose and wave to her. And mama's cool cheek was wet.

She couldn't remember how many times they came but sometimes mama had something nice for her from Addie and Ben. She even got to like the nurse who came and spoke to her and lifted her up and gave her something to eat, though she missed her favorite bottle. And then one day there were many doctors standing around the crib, looking down at her, and they were taling and smiling. She liked the one facing her; he was the nicest looking man she

had ever seen, with blond curly hair, sky blue eyes, a little moustache and shiny white teeth. She was sorry when he went away. She hoped he would come back.

After, when she was home again, she liked to think how he looked. It was nice to be home again and Addie and Ben played with her and she had a beautiful new doll that said mama and had real eyes. She was very careful with her new doll because she didn't want to spoil her lovely hair and dress. And soon she was walking around the house again, helping mama bake; she loved to watch mama braid the bread and cut out cookies with a glass. Somehow mama always surprised her with a small cake especially for her, though she never knew just when mama had made it. It was a very good cake and she ate it very slowly because she wanted the good taste to last a long time.

Then one day mama said she was getting too big to sit in the high chair and it was fun to sit at the table with Addie and Ben although her head came just above the table and mama still had to feed her with a spoon. She became very much interested in her growing and went around measuring how tall she was. She could almost reach the faucets in the sink on tip-toe and she was sure her feet were much nearer the fl or when she sat on the edge of the bed. It was fun getting bigger; she wondered how long it would take for her to be as big as Addie and Ben but they laughed and told her never because they were older than she and they were growing too.

Later, when mama fixed up her room and put a brand new cover on the bed - it was pink through the lace and very beautiful - she began to play in the dining-room in front of the big mirror, which had drawers on either side.

Sometimes Addie played there with her, each one taking a different side. But that was before the piano came and Addie began to take lessons; then Addie got so busy going to school and practicing that she couldn't play with her. But it wasn't long before Addie taught the piano to play the same songs she had taught her and it was fun to sing while Addie played.

There were other changes too. Now, when mama went shopping, she took her along. The carriage was put in the cellar, mama said, until her dolls got big enough to be wheeled. She loved to go shopping in the stores, especially the grocery store. It was full of nice things on the big marble counter and mama held her up every time Mrs. Hill had something to give her. Mrs. Hill often gave her something nice to eat and sometimes she allowed her to pick out what she wanted all by herself. The only store she didn't like was the butcher shop. She didn't like the smell in there. It was full of sawdust and feathers. Then, too, the O'Daniels always had blood on their hands and long aprons. It made her sick to see them chop off chicken heads and cut meat into pieces with a big sharp knife. She preferred to play with mama's pocket book on the bench till mama was finished. It was a noisy place, full of old women and lots of loud talking.

One time after they had finished shopping and mama had given her something to carry, a very exciting thing happened. Mama had gone upstairs to open the door while she played one-two on the marble steps, climbing one foot at a time, first right foot and then left foot, one-two. She held on to the iron grilled balustrade because she couldn't reach the wooden rail which Ben slid down, saying it was his horse. Before she reached the top, she heard mama

screaming inside. Hurrying, she saw mama leaning out the fire-escape window yelling thief, thief! But the thief must have disappeared because mama shut the window and locked it and began to search through her dresser to see what was missing.

Thank God, only a pair of earrings and my locket! The bum! Why, he must have gotten in just as I opened the door! On my baby, my poor baby! And she caught Beatrice in her arms and started to kiss and hug her, as though she had just discovered her greatest treasure.

Soon all the neighbors came in to hear about the robbery and everyone tried to guess who it could have been. Mrs. Singer kept shaking her head and repeating, the first floor, imagine, because she lived on the third floor and paid less rent. Mrs. Goodman looked worried and said everybody ought to put special locks on their doors and windows. It's those good for nothing loafers who hang around on Spenser Avenue, said Mrs. Weaver, they can come over the lot to any one of the back yards on this side, and she went to the window to show them how. The women grew more and more excited; it frightened them to think what might happen to their children if they should have to leave their apartments for a few moments. Who can watch a child and take care of other things at the same time, asked Mrs. Stone. Now it's taking the laundry up to the roof to dry, now it's running down to the candy store to telephone.

When papa came home, he had a policeman with him. By that time Addie and Ben were home from school. Addie was scared; her face was pale and she kept biting her lips. Even Ben was nervous. And in bed that night, there was a lot of whispering, timid squeals and threatening stories. So you'd better be a

good girl or the boogey man will come and eat you up, Addie said and ducked under the covers to hide. But she let Beatrice hug her close in the dark, both of them afraid to be alone there.

After that, there were other frightening times and Beatrice grew afraid of many things. Like the day when everyone ran out into the street to hide in the cellars because the Huns were coming. All the children had been sent home from school early and they ran screaming and pushing to get down the stairs. Some of them squeezed through the bars and jumped down to the basement floor. Mama held her tight, looking up at the sky, saying it was only a game. But Beatrice knew differently because all the women were complaining about their husbands leaving them alone at such a time and there was a lot of talk about the war and the Huns and it seemed that the brown sugar which she liked to eat had something to do with it.

But worst of all was the elevated train. Even mama couldn't understand how terrible it was. The big black thing came roaring down from both sides and fell on her head with such a crash that she almost scratched mama in trying to get away. She hated it. When she saw the long, black street at the bottom of the hill with the big iron posts underneath it, she made mama stop to put her down, and when mama picked her up and started again, she cried and screamed, wanting to go back. How she tore and kicked and howled! Even if the big black thing wasn't coming, she didn't want to go underneath, to cross that terrible street. And no matter what mama said or did, even if she hid her inside under the nice soft fur collar, she couldn't stop shivering and crying. Why did they have to go that way? Of course it was nice to have new socks and new shoes, but why did they have to cross that terrible

street in order to buy them? As soon as they left the rows of apartment houses and stores, passed the nursing home and went down the hill alongside the hospital grounds, she felt unsafe.

But one day, when Addie and Ben and papa were out walking with them, shame overcame her fear and she whispered to mama to wait till there was no train before they crossed the street. Then she took hold of Addie by one hand and Ben by the other while they explained all about trains, pillars, tracks, platforms and stations. Their faces and voices reassured her, especially when they told her that they came this way to and from school every day, and she even glanced up to see how high above her head it really was. Trains were fun, they said, and to prove it, they were all going to take a ride to Brooklyn! Beatrice felt a bit uncertain about it when she climbed the stairway to the top of the street, then gasped when the train on the opposite tracks came rumbling to a standstill. For a moment she wavered uneasily between shame and fear, then Ben lead her to a slot machine where, for a penny, she got two hands full of tiny pink coated nuts. When their train came along, they hustled her into a car, set her up on the straw seat facing the window and told her that if she was a good girl they would take her to see Grandma Theresa, who was papa's mother, and then treat her to a big ice-cream soda in Cousin Louis' store. It all sounded very new and jolly though she was much more interested in watching the streets and houses fly past her. As the train curved dangerously close to one house, Beatrice caught her breath; she could look right into the open windows of the rooms and see the people inside. A woman was washing dishes in the kitchen, a man was reading a newspaper on the bed, two children were playing on the floor. Almost, she felt, she could reach out her hand and touch the

curtains blowing out of the parlour. Her mind was startled at the thought of people living so close to the train that everybody could look inside and see what was going on. Unpleasant images arose, embarrasing her privacy. And supposing the train forgot to go around the street and went straight through the house? She thought nothing could be worse and felt dreadfully sorry for the people who lived there. How awful to hear the noise and see the black street all day long. And at night, too? Of course, Addie said, or how would people be able to get home again? Beatrice tried to imagine herself sleeping in a house facing the elevated train and automatically turned away from the window. Her knees hurt and she was tired. Why didn't they get off when the train stopped? But mama kept putting it off from station to station, saying it was the next one and the next, until Beatrice felt sick. The noise hurt her ears and sitting still on the seat made her dizzy. Papa gave her a round candy from a package he took out of his pocket, but the taste sickened her still more and she had to spit it out. Nor did anything help: sitting on mama's lap or leaning against Ben or seeing Addie make funny faces. And then, when they did get off the train, it was only to change to another train because that was the way to get to Brooklyn, where Grandma Theresa lived. Beatrice began to cry; she wanted to go home. Papa got angry and said all right, if she didn't behave herself, he would send her home all alone, which made things worse because she knew she could never find her way back by herself and to be away from mama was unthinkable. She fell asleep, worrying. And when they finally reached Grandma's house, she was too cross and sleepy and sick to enjoy the fuss everyone made over her. She didn't like Grandma Theresa. The whole house smelled like a lemon smell, old and dark. Grandma and Grandpa were old; they

talked, walked and looked old. They smelled like lemon, too. She shrank when they kissed her, fondled her, tried to lift her up. Papa shrugged his shoulders; he was very disappointed with her and quite displeased. Afterwards, they went to Cousin Louis' store and Beatrice began to feel better. Cousin Louis and Molly had three children, Annie, Sadie and Freddie, and it was fun to sit with them at the counter and order big ice-cream sodas. They made a game of their names and sang Ka-tie, Ma-xie, Ben-jie, Lou-ie, Bea-ttie, until the store shook with their screams and laughter. That was the best part of the day for Beatrice and the only part she thoroughly enjoyed. The rest was like the beginning, except that she slept all the way home and never knew when she was put into her own bed.

That summer she was four years old and there was a birthday cake with her name on it and five candles, one bigger than the rest, for good luck, and some of the children in the neighborhood were there and they all clapped when she blew out all the lights with one great big breath. There was chocolate milk and cake and ice cream for everybody and the children had funny hats and prizes, besides. She had a very good time at the party and later, when everybody went home, mama said she had been a very good girl because she hadn't spilled anything on her new pink dress. Ben gave her a big red-white-and-blue rubber ball and Addie gave her a tiny porcelain doll with moveable arms and legs and when papa came home he gave her a surprise present inside a lovely box colored with pictures. It was a set of unbreakable dishes with the same colored pictures that were on the box. Mama gave her five love smacks and kisses, saying, that's from me, because she had already made the cake and the party for her and didn't have to give her any extra present. Beatrice was very happy that

day and after a special dinner in the dining-room she was allowed to sing and dance the new piece that Addie had learned on the piano. It was just for the family and mama and papa looked very pleased because she was getting to be such a nice big girl.

Then, papa stopped giving her baths and she missed having him squeeze the big sponge over her head and splash water over her body, but he said she was too big now and could take baths by herself. It wasn't nearly so much fun except that sometimes mama came into the tub with her and then it was even nicer than before when papa had bathed her. Then mama would play What's This, just as Ben had done when she was a baby, and mama would tickle her as she went from one part to another calling what 's this and this, and Beatrice kept giggling and squirming as she answered, My ear, my nosie, my mouth, my chin, and finally she lay back against mama's nice soft body while they both laughed together.

It was very hot that summer and once they all went up to the roof to sleep. They took quilts and pillows and sheets with them and spread everything out comfortably, but soon more and more of the neighbors came up to do the same thing and it got crowded and noisy and the children thought it was a game and ran around laughing because everybody looked so funny lying together, and then suddenly it began to rain. Everybody jumped up, collected family belongings and rushed down the stairs! Papa was disgusted. He blamed it all on mama, saying she was always thinking up some brand new idea. And that was the first and last time they tried sleeping up on the roof, which they called their tin beach.

As the days grew longer for Beatrice, she began to notice things more carefully than before. Like the gas light which fanned into many colors when

mama held the match up to the tip of the pipe, lifting the lamp and then letting it fall slowly back in place. She would hear a low hiss as mama turned the gas ring, then see a small flame pop up and spread itself out. It was blue, green, orange, yellow, with pretty changing curls leaping all around the edges, and then gradually the fan grew still and all yellow except at the top where it remained uneven. She loved to watch the lights go on, especially in the dining-room where there was a big glass chandelier with three gas jets underneath. It was nice to sit there and see the lights make pictures in the room, on the table, on their faces. If anyone moved, the picture changed. If a breeze came in, the walls danced. Now the light was a box, then long and broad, in two pieces, three. In the light, everyone's face looked nice and pink. Addie didn't look so skinny in the light and her eyes and teeth became very shiny. Papa's face looked happier in the light; you could see how blue his eyes were. Ben became a little Indian boy with brown skin and straight black hair. Mama became a princess or a queen, but mama was always beautiful, even out of the light. The light made Beatrice feel warm; her cheeks began to burn and she felt nice inside and full of love. It happened every night, like magic; as soon as the gas light was turned on, she grew warm all over and could feel her face getting red. Sometimes, mama thought it was a fever, but Beatrice would laugh and say it was the light and mama would laugh, puzzled, too.

Mama always left one light burning at night, the one in the hall between the kitchen and the bathroom. That was in case anyone had to go to the toilet or wanted a drink and also for papa when he came home very late. For a long time, Beatrice would wake in the middle of the night and have to call mama from her bed. Ma-ma. The voice would go all the way to mama's room. She

could hear it go very quietly all the way down the hall, through the dining-room and into mama's bedroom. But sometimes it wasn't loud enough to get through the dining-room into mama's bedroom and then she would have to call mama again. The house seemed so dark and still at night. Only the little gas light wasn't sleeping and she would listen for the sound of mama's bare feet coming down the hall to meet her. She was sorry that she had to wake mama up. Mama looked so tired and sleepy. She would sit on the edge of the bathtub till Beatrice finished, her hair coming down over her nightgown in two long braids. And then Beatrice would tell mama she was sorry and that she couldn't help it and mama would kiss her goodnight again and say it was all right, she wanted her to call, and then she would tuck Beatrice in next to Addie and see if Ben was all right and go back to her own bed to sleep. But once when Beatrice woke up and sat up to call mama, Addie got mad and said she was a cry-baby, so she lay down again and fell asleep dreaming that she had wet the bed and in the morning she was terribly ashamed because it was true. Then mama scolded Addie for making her keep it in and Addie said I'm sure she did it on purpose, but Ben took her part, saying she's only a baby, what do you want, and he gave her a French kiss by pinching her cheeks.

Though sometimes she woke up when she didn't have to go, because papa had come in late and mama was hollering at him. Addie and Ben would be giggling and whispering, saying papa was drunk and couldn't walk by himself. And mama would begin to cry; it was a shame for a man with three children to behave like that, he looked like a common Bowery bum, and what would the neighbors say? And papa would go on mumbling funny words, cursing and laughing, and they would hear him stagger down the hall, trying to get to his room. And they

could hear mama's crying and complaining for a long time until papa began to snore. But all Beatrice could remember next day was what Addie had said, that papa was like a baby because mama had to undress him and put him to bed, and when she saw mama's face, she didn't know why they had laughed. There were dark rings under mama's eyes and she looked very sad and quiet, as though she wanted to cry. Then Beatrice tried to be a good girl and not bother mama because she didn't know what else to do.

It was hard to understand about papa. When Beatrice saw him so neat and dressed after his morning's bath, she couldn't imagine he was the same papa of the night before. His manner was the same as usual, his walk, everything about him was business-like and important, though nobody spoke to him or looked directly at him, least of all mama. It was only when Grandma Theresa came to the house for a visit that his manner changed. Then he joked a lot, listened carefully to everything she said and behaved like a good son. It was hard to think of papa as someone's little boy, the way Ben was to mama, but Grandma Theresa talked to him just as mama did to Ben, calling him my boy, my son, my child, Max my darling. If Grandma didn't like something, she told papa so and made papa promise to obey her, which papa did, looking apologetic and nodding respectfully. Mama said Grandma was clever, shrewd.

She hasn't been married four times for nothing, believe me! And the way mama said that, Beatrice could tell mama didn't like Grandma very much. The way she takes care of herself, the way she turns everybody around her little finger, and mama shook her head in false admiration. Nothing's too good for her, milk baths, special creams for her hands and face, the most expensive foods - who would take her for a woman of sixty-eight? No one. The

way she walks, talks - Don't worry, I know where her money comes from, I'm not such a fool as papa thinks. The way he laughs at every little thing, to make his mother think she's so smart. Some people, they have all the luck in the world. You'd think his mother was I don't know what, that she had treated him - God help my children if I was like that. An iron hand under a silk glove, that's her. And papa's just like her; he's his mother all over again, to a T and mama pinched two fingers together in the air.

To Beatrice, Grandma was the one who made her wash her hands and face in a special way - once, twice, three times - repeating strange words after her. She didn't know what any of them meant except that Grandma blessed her afterwards and said that was how to make God love her. And no matter what Grandma did, whether it was to eat or drink or go in or out of a doorway, she stopped to say a few words under her breath. That was because she was a holy woman, mama said. What's that, Beatrice asked. I can't explain, mama answered, she was educated like a teacher, and mama used a strange word that Beatrice couldn't understand. Her father had been a very learned man and since he had no son he had taught her all the books he knew. In a way, said mama, it's a pity she wasn't a man; she could have been a leading rabbi, somebody great. Rabbi, that was an old man with a long beard, wearing a long black coat and a small round black hat on top of his head; Beatrice remembered seeing one once but failed to connect him with Grandma Theresa. Anyway, she was papa's mother. Secretly, Beatrice preferred the stories mama told her about her other grandma, Stella, the one who had gone back to live in Europe. But mama and papa were more important than either of them because no one was more important than mama and papa or Addie and Ben, and no time or place was more important than the one she, Beatrice Berger, knew.

Not even when it came to Tanta Mutter, whose house they visited every Sunday to read the funny papers. Though she looked forward to Sundays; she liked Tanta Mutter's house; it was full of grown men cousins and nice things to play with. Tanta Mutter was her aunt-mother, mama said, and Beatrice decided she ought to love her, though not so much as she loved mama, of course. But it was nice to have an aunt-mother because that meant she had two homes, one best and one next-best, and she could walk and play and sit in Tanta Mutter's house just as she did in her own.

Tanta Mutter had a big family and on Sunday everybody was there except Alice, who was married and lived in Philadelphia, and Gene, whom Beatrice had never seen. Nobody knew where he was. There was a picture of him on the piano. Tanta Mutter would look at the picture and sigh. When Beatrice asked about him, Tanta Mutter showed her some picture postcards that Gene had sent her. They were pictures of far away places where Gene travelled. Tanta Mutter told her something about them, pointing out buildings and costumes and animals, but Beatrice could tell she didn't care much about them; her voice was sad.

He always wanted to run away and see the world, even when he was a little boy. The first time he was twelve years old; he hid away on a ship. I don't know how he did it, or why they kept him. And now I haven't seen him for more than three years. And again she sighed.

Nobody else talked about Gene; they acted as though he was a secret. When Tanta Mutter began, they would walk out of the room or start talking about something else. Sometimes, Howard, who was the oldest, or Philip, who was a doctor, would get angry and say, why don't you forget him, or, what's the use, ma? Even Bernard, who was the quiet one, the good-natured one, called

Gene a good-for-nothing loafer. George only laughed and said Gene was a rolling stone, a born bum.

George was a dentist and sometimes he let Beatrice sit in the big white chair that went up and down and let her read the funny papers there. She liked George; he was very good looking. He liked to flirt with her and said that she would be a heart-breaker some day. He winked at her, squeezed her arm and pinched her cheek, but since it was George, she didn't mind. She laughed when he showed her his instruments and made believe that he was going to use them on her; she squealed but she wasn't really afraid. The only thing she knew about dentists was that her cousin George was one.

But it was about Gene that she thought mostly, all kinds of dangerous and exciting things. Something told her he was Tanta Mutter's favorite, maybe because he was the baby of the family too, just like her. She couldn't help feeling sorry for Tanta Mutter and wished Gene would come home so that she could see him too. She felt a great respect for the little old lady. Tanta Mutter always wore long dresses tied stiffly at the neck. A long gold chain hung down to her waist and was pinned to a watch in her pocket. It was a locket watch that opened and showed two pictures, one of Tanta Mutter when she was young and the other of her husband who had died. Beatrice liked to press the little button and see the two sides spring open but she knew she had to be careful because it was a very fine old watch and meant a lot to Tanta Mutter. The aunt-mother was a very small lady to have such big sons; she wasn't much taller than Addie. But there was something very wonderful about her, the way she sat er talked or held a book. Maybe because she was so educated. Emma had said that. It meant that Tanta Mutter could speak French and German and Italian and do many other things besides play the piano. She always had a box of sweets for the children. That was another Sunday treat. Sometime during the

day, while the children were sitting around reading the comic strips and colored funny pages in the papers, she would be sure to come in with a big tin box which was forever and mysteriously full of candy. Beatrice took a long time to pick hers and then ate it very slowly because it was much better than any candy she could buy in a candy store.

It was at about this time that Beatrice noticed the big picture which mama had hung in the hall after the piano came. It was a picture of a fish in a big gold frame, covered with glass. The fish was in dark green water and looked very queerly at Beatrice. Mama cooked fish for dinner once or twice a week but that kind of fish didn't seem the same as the fish in the picture. This fish looked so dark and smooth and different behind the glass; sometimes when she closed her eyes half way, it began to move; its round marble eyes seemed to be looking right at her. Mama said it lived deep in the ocean. That made her think of Gene. Somehow, she connected him with the picture and whenever she looked at it she thought of the postcards he sent home from his travels.

It was hard to understand about travelling. When you went upstairs to a train and rode for a long time to visit someone, that was travelling, and yet that wasn't the same thing Gene did. You took a boat and crossed the ocean, mama said. Like a fish? Yes, like a fish. You got on a big boat and swam across the water. Beatrice frowned; she couldn't understand. And when papa took them to the beach one Saturday during a very hot week in August, Beatrice was afraid to go into the ocean. Addie and Ben ran up and down the sand, chased by the waves, and tried to get her to come in, but only when mama or papa carried her high above the ocean would she consent and then, how she clung and

squealed! Her glee was mixed with fear: supposing the fish came along and swallowed her up? She couldn't understand how other children managed, how they stayed on top of the water. She watched them splash and jump around and even saw a few swim out over the waves.

After a picnic lunch on the beach, Ben taught her to make mud pies, a castle with a tunnel and many other nice things. But she wouldn't sit near the waves; he had to bring the water back in his pail. The size of the ocean frightened her; it went all the way up to the sky and far, far out on either side. How did it stay there? Supposing it decided to move, to come down over the beach? She remembered the time the water in the bathtub had overflowed. Papa had put his hand way down to the bottom, pulled out the stopper and made the water go back. She wondered if there was a stopper at the bottom of the ocean and who pulled it out. God, mama said, and she told Beatrice the story of the ark. Ben said he knew all about it and she let him tell her the story again while he covered her with sand. Then she started to cry because the sand was so heavy and she couldn't move, so Ben pulled her out and let her bury him while he chanted, first you cry and then you laugh and then you make a boogey face. And he made one so well that she couldn't help kissing him every time.

Addie sat quietly between mama and papa; she didn't like to get the sand on her and she kept wiping it off her hands, mincingly. She was glad when they got ready to go home. Mama had to put something on her skin because it was very red and Addie said it hurt like fire.

After that she heard a lot more about God's stories. She liked to have Ben read them to her from a book. She began to make up stories of her own.

The sun and moon were God's lamps, one for the day and one for the night. When it rained, it meant God was crying. When he wanted to hide, he made clouds. When someone God liked died, he put a new star in the sky so that they would have lamps too. It was hard to see God, he was so big. His hand reached down to the bottom of the ocean. God was wonderful, he could make anything. She loved God.

Another Saturday mama got them dressed early and told them they were going to visit Cousin Eunice. Beatrice said she didn't want to go if they had to take a train, the train smell made her sick. But mama said she would have to be a specially good girl because Cousin Eunice was very sick, in bed, and that the doctor was there and everybody would have to be very quiet. And mama's voice and face were so sad that Beatrice didn't say anything more.

She entered Cousin Eunice's bedroom, on tip-toe, her eyes wide and troubled by so many people in the room. Cousin Louis was there with his arm around Molly who was crying. Mama took her over to the bed because Cousin Eunice wanted to see her. Beatrice could hardly talk above a whisper. Her cousin's face was so pale, she felt sorry for her. Even when she smiled you could see how sick she was. Cousin Eunice had two thick brown braids and when she leaned over the bed to vomit, Beatrice was worried that the braids would fall into the basin.

Cousin Paul took her out of the bedroom into the kitchen to show her some lovely things. There was a blue glass slipper she liked very much and also some small Chinese things. One showed a boy running after a girl through a pretty garden and Beatrice turned the bottle round and round until she got tired and wished the girl would stand still so that the boy could catch her, but he never did. She found many things to play with in the kitchen and Cousin Paul

showed her how the stove worked. He put coal inside two holes, started the fire and then covered the holes with two round iron lids. He set two kettles of water on top to boil. It was different from mama's gas stove. She thought this one was more fun, but Cousin Paul told her not to touch it because she would get burned if she did.

More and more people came to the house; she knew some of them. Mama and Cousin Miriam, who was Paul's sister, were crying. They came into the kitchen to get the hot water and Beatrice saw how red their eyes were. David was crying too; he was Eunice's brother. Addie and Ben were sitting in the living room with papa. A few men were smoking and talking quietly. The cigar smoke reminded Beatrice of the train smell and made her feel sick again so she went back to play with her blue glass slipper in the kitchen.

Before she went home, Cousin Paul gave her a box full of toys. In it were the blue glass slipper, two Chinese porcelain dolls and the toothpick bottle showing the boy running after the girl. Papa and mama looked very sad so she didn't bother them about the train. She kept her eyes closed and thought about her nice new toys until she fell asleep.

It was Addie who told her that Cousin Eunice was dead. Beatrice didn't understand. But mama and papa got dressed in black and asked Mrs. Singer to take care of the children. Addie had to promise to watch Beatrice and Ben. Ben played with Jerry, the baby, and Addie played house with Florence. Beatrice showed Birdie her blue glass slipper and Birdie cried because she didn't have one just like it. Mrs. Singer gave everybody milk and cake and told them to be good or she would tell their papas because she wasn't used to having so many children in the house at one time.

Beatrice didn't think about Cousin Eunice for a long time, until one day mama asked her to go to the grocery for some baking powder. Since mama didn't say to come back right away, Beatrice decided to play a little hop-scotch on the sidewalk in front of the house. Besides, Mrs. Hill was busy talking to some women in the store. Soon she was running, arms outstretched, to catch the wind. It was a lovely day; the cool morning air was refreshing. She breathed deeply, feeling the street leap inside her. Her legs kicked back; she could feel them moving under her, touching her dress. Before she knew it, she was at the corner way down past the row of grey stone houses and apartment buildings. She stopped, made four Chinaman jumps, and turned around. It felt good to stretch and laugh out loud. Here was the store that had fooled them. It had been a funny joke: everybody yelling ICE CREAM ON THE CORNER FOR NOTHING. All the kids had run there. And then they found out that it meant: I scream on the corner for nothing. She began to sniff through her nose, first one side, then the other, then both together. Pinching her nose she found she could breathe through her mouth. It was a delightful discovery. Could she hear with her eyes? She tried; there was a drumming in her ears as her fingers pressed against them. Could she see without opening her eyes? She closed them, peeped through them timidly once or twice, then shut them hard. It was dark inside; she couldn't move. How terrible not to see! It made her dizzy and afraid. Her eyelids flew open; the street was still there and the houses on both sides. She tried walking with her eyes closed. It was queer: her feet inched slowly forward. Someone told her to look where she was going. It was a woman with a shopping bag. Beatrice smiled and said 'scuse me, then hop-skipped back to the house. All the way, she kept thinking, I can breathe with my mouth, I can breathe with my mouth, I can eat with my nose, I can eat with my nose. And she tried to imagine eating soup or chicken or potatoes with her nose and she burst out

laughing, knowing that it couldn't be done. But she didn't have a chance to tell mama about it because mama was mad about having to wait for the baking powder so long. So she went into the dining room to study herself in the mirror and there she found out why Cousin Eunice had died. It was very simple to die: all you had to do was to stop breathing, shut your ears and eyes and be perfectly still. It took quite a while till she could pinch her nose, cover her eyes and shut her ears all at the same time. Then she became very thoughtful and somewhat sad. Why should anyone want to die? No air, no light, no sound, alone inside with nothing - she never wanted to die!

But she couldn't forget what she had learned that day; the thought fascinated her. Mrs. Brooks, who took care of the candy store when her husband was busy, asked Beatrice to mind the baby carriage for a few minutes. The baby was kicking its arms and legs about, not caring who watched her. Beatrice looked at the baby with interest. Lightly, she placed her hand over its nose, its mouth. The infant grew red and began to squirm and at the first opportunity began to shriek and cry. Mrs. Brooks came running. Beatrice stood there white and trembling but she had nothing to say, nothing. She felt cold all over. Supposing the baby had died? She had touched life for the first time and found it terrible, real. She worried about it for a long time.

Out of that experience came a new knowledge. Everything had its use, she found. There was drink for thirst, food for hunger, fun for laughter, tears for hurt, day for play and night for sleep, warmth for cold and shade for heat, air for breath and light for eyes. Everything had its use. It was all so wonderful.

She became interested in her hands. She must have had tiny baby hands too, once. She studied the five fingers on each hand. What made them hers? She

knew they were hers, hers different from anybody else's. She looked at the way her fingers joined her palms, how the nails fitted on top. Mama's hands were big; they were nice hands; she loved to kiss them. She wondered how hands changed. It was hard to imagine that her hands would ever be different from the way they were now. Why, she knew her fingers by heart; they were like babies, each with its own face and body. They were her own hands, Beatrice's. She kissed each fingertip.

She stared at her eyes in the mirror. That was Beatrice. She saw herself, knew herself. Those were her eyes. She looked into them. They were dark eyes. Were they brown or black? It was hard to tell. She saw a big circle surrounded by white. She got closer to the mirror, her forehead almost touching the glass. In the middle of the dark circle she saw another circle, darker still. It seemed to get bigger as she looked at it. It looked dark blue, but not blue like papa's eyes; his were milky blue. Did everybody have a spot in the middle of their eyes? She saw three little white dots in each eye. They looked like pin points. She thought they were in the mirror and tried to rub them off but they stayed in her eyes. What made eyes see? How did they know she was Beatrice? She frowned and then laughed. Something inside her must tell her I'm Beatrice. It was that something that looked out of her eyes. She was sure her eyes would never change. The something inside would always be the same, she was sure of that. Even if she got big, she would still be Beatrice. Who else? She laughed and ran away.

It was fun making a man. She started with his head and then drew his arms and legs. It wasn't really right; a man didn't look like that. The ears, she

forgot. She put a little loop on each side of the head. Then she started over again. When mama came to the table and asked what she was doing, she scribbled her pencil all over the paper and then crumpled it up. I can't draw, she said and flushed.

She ran down to play on the stoop. The children were trying to see who could get his head into one of the spirals of the iron railing. A few heads kept poking around, yelling, this is my turn. Everybody cheered when little Sammy Kaplan stuck his head through the iron loop. Atta boy, baldy, they cried. Sammy came out grinning toothlessly, proud that his shaven head had some use. The children began to try harder to get their heads through. Suddenly Beatrice found herself pinned under the railing, unable to get out. The blood rushed to her face. Frightened, she seized hold of the iron twists on either side of her head and began to scream. I can't get out, I can't move! The children ran over to coach her. This way, Bee! Push your ear up! Beatrice could no nothing but sob, feeling her head caught and separated from the rest of her. Someone ran to tell Mrs. Berger and soon mama was shouting and exclaiming to everyone around. She had a child go for a carpenter and when he came, he had to saw through the iron. Beatrice kept her eyes shut tightly; the sound of the saw at her ear frightened her more than anything else. Be careful, be careful, mama kept yelling, her hands protecting Beatrice's head. Gee, he might cut her head off, Sammy said in a whisper. When the spiral was finally cut and loosened, mama lifted Beatrice out and then, right in front of everybody, gave her a licking.

Did you ever, mama kept saying to the neighbors who came to find out what happened, a child has nothing better to do than to put her head in a stoop! I gave it to her, believe me, a lesson she won't forget so soon. Good, good,

said Mrs. Singer, it serves her right, she had it coming to her. I wasn't the only one, sobbed Beatrice, all the children were doing it. So what, demanded mama, if someone jumps off the roof, must you follow? Mrs. Weaver shook her head in sympathy. Children, what do you expect, they have no better place to play. God forbid, mama retorted, she might have been killed. You should have seen her choking with that iron collar around her neck. The women had to smile. Believe me, it's no joke, the way that carpenter had to saw her out of it. Pooh, I wouldn't want it to happen to the worst dog. Then why did you hit me, gulped Beatrice, thinking how all the children had watched her. So you won't do it again, that's why, answered mama. Mrs. Singer began to laugh out loud, unable to contain herself any longer. Honestly, Mrs. Berger, I can't help thinking of a story I once heard. A friend of mine had a little girl, and one day while she was playing, she thought it would be a good idea to see if she could get the handle of an umbrella into her mouth. You know, a man's umbrella, like a cane with a big wooden handle, almost as wide as your hand, hooked. Well, so she tried and tried, pushing it this way and that, until finally, the devil only knows how, she got it in. A thing like that in a child's mouth, can you imagine? What that poor mother went through till they got the handle out! And what do you suppose the child did? So help me, it's the truth. No sooner did they got the handle out of her mouth - hours it took, you can imagine how the handle was stuck inside, pushing out the cheeks - then what do you think she did? Mrs. Singer slapped her mouth, apologizing for her laughter. While the mother was explaining what had happened, the little girlpicked up the umbrella and said, like this. And she got it stuck inside her mouth again!

Beatrice left the room. What a silly little girl. She couldn't see what was so funny about that story. That Mrs. Singer! Now if it had been Birdie or Florence. Huh! But why, if Sammy had gotten his head in and out, couldn't she? After all, she had put her head through, so the hole must have been big enough. Then why did her head get stuck? Why couldn't she pull it out again? Fraidy-cat, fraidy-cat, she told herself, that's why! She stuck out her tongue at herself.

She didn't try it again; the cut railing was there to remind her. Whenever she passed it, she thought of the umbrella, Sammy, the saw, and quickly turned away. There were other things to do on the street. There was Red Rover and skip rope and tag. The only thing they had to watch out for was a wagon or bike. But mostly the big kids played on the street and mama made Beatrice stay on the sidewalk in front of the house. Potsy was a good game; the children liked it. They used the sidewalk squares as boxes, numbering them with chalk from one to six. But one day, as Beatrice was hopping and kicking the piece of tin before her, trying to keep it from going outside the squares, something happened. Her fingers clutched the air uncertainly and her cheeks blew out like twin balloons. She missed and her right foot came down with a stamp. No one ran up to take her place. All interest in the game had vanished. Then she saw the two figures coming along the street. They passed by the staring children and stopped in front of a house a few feet away. It was the house where Tanta Mutter lived. Beatrice could only gasp, Gene, and off she ran. Her hero had come home!

She sat quietly on his lap, not daring to look directly at him or at the Indian he had brought back with him. Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief,

doctor, lawyer, Indian Chief - her knowledge was now complete. And such a real one, from feathered head-dress down to beaded moccasins, with pipe, braids, leather pants and everything. But he wasn't like the drug-store Indian. He was real. She stole quick looks at his face, noting the dark wrinkled skin, the narrow eyes, the broad cheeks, the coarse hair. He answered Gene in grunts and short phrases and when he smiled he had dirty yellow teeth. She was thrilled. Even Gene was dressed differently, like a cowboy; he had a red handkerchief around his neck and wore a dark rough shirt. She loved him. As he sat there, playing with his long rolled up rope, she knew Gene could never look any other way, that she had always imagined him like this. He looked wild in a young handsome way; his straight black hair fell carelessly over his forehead and ears; his face was brown and his voice was rich with the strange far away places he had been. He laughed at the horns hanging on the wall and told how he had captured the bull. Beatrice listened excitedly. How much better to hear his stories than to see the picture post cards!

Addie and Ben stood about timidly, unable to take their eyes off the Indian. Never had they seen such a sight before, and so close! What the kids on the street would give to be inside looking at him! And to think that Gene should be their cousin, Gene, who dressed like a cowboy, wore a big hat and had an Indian for his friend! Ben took the hat in his hand and examined it when he thought no one was looking. Boy, what a hat, like those they showed in the western movies, with he-men riding around ranches, fighting, shooting, stealing cattle. He wondered if the Indian ever used war paint and where Gene had his guns. Mayte Gene had captured the Indian and brought him back as a prize! Wow!

Tanta Lutter's reserve affected Beatrice strangely; she sensed the curious mixture of feelings beneath the outward calm. It was as though the little aunt-mother was disturbed and pleased, worried and relieved, glad and sorry all together. And everybody standing around quietly, just listening or talking, as though nothing had happened. It made the home-coming seem so ordinary, so unimportant. Whenever Gene stopped talking, Beatrice looked around uneasily, wondering what everybody was waiting for. After a while, she noticed a large package on the table; it was heavily wrapped and tied with thick cord. She asked Gene what that was and pointed to it. He laughed and set her down, saying he had almost forgotten about the surprise. It was a large and narrow package and everyone became curious when he set it on the floor and began to split the cord with his pocket knife. Beatrice grew nervous, her eyes tense. The cover was removed, then slowly the straw. Tanta Lutter shrieked and ran from the room. Feet tripped, trying to back away. Someone yelled hey, what's the big idea? Beatrice just stood there biting her finger, staring down. Look out for the kid! She was snatched and carried off to the next room, Gene's laughter following uproariously.

But she had seen it! She felt suddenly weak and powerless with the wild beauty of the thing; the magic behind it made her heart beat madly. For Gene had brought home a snake, one of the most beautiful and dangerous things in the world.

Aw ma, it's dead, can't you see, look - Gene came to the doorway, the snake in his arms. A cry of horror met him; she couldn't bear the sight of it. Again he laughed, more surprised than anyone else. All right, ma, I'm sorry;

I thought you'd got a kick out of it. He's such a swell guy, too. You ought to see the rattler I got off his tail. Tanta Mutter waved her hands at him, motioning him out; she'd seen enough already. Gene's laugh became puzzled, embarrassed. His eyes sought Beatrice's; there was a plea in them. His laughter grew confident again. Look at that kid, I bet she's not scared! Come on, Bee, you can touch it. He waved his head and she followed him back into the living-room. For a moment, she crouched back into her body, breathing hard. Her lips were drawn in between her teeth. But her eyes glistened, following the scaled length of the coiled up body. Slowly, she lifted her arm and reached out her fingers. The skin was rough, leathery. The feeling was different from anything she had touched before. The little head looked so alive, the eyes stone-like and shiny. She looked around and laughed gleefully. Isn't it funny, she asked.

In the days that followed Gene's return, word began to spread that Tanta Mutter was rich. Beatrice wondered if the Indian Chief, who had disappeared the day after he arrived, had anything to do with it. Indians were full of gold; everybody knew that. And now Tanta Mutter was going to Europe. To visit some relatives and friends, mama said. But why, Beatrice insisted. Because there was a war and she wanted to help them. The idea shook her world. Leaving home to travel was all right for Gene, but Tanta Mutter. It meant there would be no more Sunday visits, no more funny papers in the big white dentist's chair, no more candy treats, no locket watch to open and close, no anything! Not even French lessons for Addie, with Tanta Mutter explaining le chat, le chien, parlez-vous francais? And no aunt-mother to watch and listen to as she moved about so dignified in her high-necked, lace-cuffed long silk dresses.

She couldn't understand. Something was happening to change her world; it would never be the same again, never. Of that she was sure.

And when the day for Tanta Hutter's departure came, she sat silent and unhappy in a room full of people, trunks and flowers. No one paid any attention to her until Tanta Hutter kissed her goodbye and promised to bring her a present from Europe when she came back.

Gene went with her, the house was emptied, George opened a dentist's office elsewhere - the days at Tanta Hutter's were finished. Beatrice felt dazed, left behind. Grandma Stella, Gene, Tanta Hutter, they travelled. Then maybe other people did too. Travelling, life, death, yesterday, today, long ago, people, the world - why, how long, where, how big? She looked at the picture in the big gilt frame for an answer. You took a taxi, mama said. To a boat station? Yes, to a pier. You went on the boat and crossed the ocean until you got to Europe. It took two weeks. Tanta Hutter would come back in three months.

To Beatrice that was a long time to wait. For days after, she walked up and down the street, looking in at the vacant windows where curtains and plants used to be. Then the house painters came and Beatrice stopped watching. She resented their intrusion, resented the familiar walls forgetting who had lived there before, their indifference to who would come to take Tanta Hutter's place.

Towards the end of summer, she came down with measles. She lay on the daven port in the dining-room. The green blinds were drawn to shut out the light. It was hot and stuffy under the blanket. Mama said she had to keep covered if she wanted to get well. As the fever wore off, she began to think of dying. She thought of Cousin Eunice, of Mrs. Brooks' baby. In the stillness she could hear her heart beat. It was the only sound. She held her breath

for longer and longer counts - eight, nine, ten. And when it stopped altogether, you were dead. Just like that, simply. You just stopped breathing and then - She pictured mama crying, crying because she was dead. It was terrible. She felt overcome by pity. Poor mama, poor dead Beatrice. Why darling, you're crying, what's the matter? Mama was beside her, feeling her hands and face. Beatrice threw her arms around mama's neck. Oh ma, I'm so glad you're here, I never want to leave you, never! Please stay with me always! And after mama had rocked her back and forth for a while, hushing and loving her, she looked up anxiously and said oh ma, I won't die, will I, I'm so afraid. Mama turned her head and spat at the air, furious at the devils who had put such a thought into her daughter's head. Her speech was alien, hostile, but it made Beatrice feel better. Then mama began to pray over her in long breathless sentences, hardly above a whisper; her fingers moved quietly in Beatrice's hair, soothing her scalp. And then mama kissed her and said she would have no more bad thoughts and that she would be all better tomorrow and what would she like to eat?

Soon it was time for school to begin and Addie and Ben began talking about the new things they would buy and Beatrice felt alone. While they were busy getting ready their new notebooks and school bags and pencil supplies, she sat around wishing miserably that the first day would never come. How she envied them their excitement about new classes and new teachers! Addie said Miss Carey was the nicest teacher in the school, so young and pretty. All the kids knew she was Mr. Lansing's sweetheart; he called her Mildred. She played the piano in the assembly room. Her classes gave the best plays.

She always gave them parties. Addie chatted away happily. Maybe Miss Carey would choose her to be the class monitor. And Addie told Beatrice what that meant! She was going to wear her best dress to school.

Beatrice thought nothing could be more wonderful than to go to school. I'm going to go to school too, she announced. Addie snorted. You! Why, you're too little, only just four! And the way she looked and said that, made Beatrice mad. How many times had papa said that she had more sense than the other two, that even she could do things better than they did? She wasn't a baby! And she was sick and tired of being told she was too young for this, too young for that! Addie shrugged her shoulders and skipped away.

The day before school opened, papa took Ben to the barbershop and when they came back Ben had a new haircut. It made him look like a big boy. He grinned. No more buster browns for me, he said. Addie spread their new school supplies over the table. She had a new hair ribbon in her barrette. They looked so nice carrying their school bags.

After breakfast next morning, Beatrice stood at the door with mama to watch all the children go off to school. She heard their laughter on the stairs, their greetings in the halls. Not all went to the same school. There was the old exchange of boos and cheers. What a dump! Call that a school? It's an old chicken coop! Mrs. Weaver came out of her apartment and smiled, saying, I'm glad to get rid of them at last. Just listen to them! Believe me, it will be a relief, for a change. At least I know they're safe. These city streets! And you, Beatrice, when are you going to school? Mama shook her head. I'll be glad when she can go, too, then I can be a free lady once more.

At noon, when Addie and Ben came home for lunch, full of school talk. Beatrice pretended not to hear. She finished her milk hurriedly and left the

table; mama was too busy with the others to notice. Once out of the house, she began to run. How her heart beat as she headed down the hill, past the hospital, under the elevated tracks! She joined a group of children crossing the street and followed them. She would show Addie who was a baby. It was a long walk to the school; she kept close to a big girl swinging her school bag. When she reached the school building, she went up to a big door and hoped someone would come along to let her in. Some teachers, returning from lunch, saw her and asked what she was doing there. One of them laughed at her answer and picked her up, saying, well why not, a nice little girl like you, of course you can come to our school. She carried her up the broad flight of stairs. Beatrice was sure it was Miss Carey. Your name is Mildred, she said. All the teachers laughed. Beatrice blushed but she was happy inside, happy and excited.

When she was set down in front of a big man who put his glasses at the end of his nose to look at her, doubt closed in on her. A man. Maybe it was Mr. Lansing, the principal. He turned out to be very nice. He sat her on his kneeand asked why she wanted to go to school. She told him what mama had said and all about Addie and Ben. He put his hand over his mouth and nodded very seriously. And besides, I know lots of poems and songs and how to spell and count and everything. So please can't I come to school, too?

When Addie and Ben came into the office, she slid off Mr. Lansing's lap and ran behind his chair. Please tell them I can stay, please tell them, she pleaded. Addie and Ben stood there, scared and worried. Mr. Lansing asked Addie for their telephone number and she stammered that it was the candy store's. He nodded and called it, then made someone repeat the message for Mrs. Berger that Beatrice was safe in school and that Addie would bring her

home at three o'clock.

She spent the afternoon in Miss Carey's room. It was fun sitting on the floor, fixing the drawers in the teacher's desk. She put all the penpoints in one box, all the rubber bands in another - Addie gave her funny looks but she didn't mind, the boys and girls winked at her and smiled. She thought it was a very nice class. And when the bell rang, Miss Carey kissed her goodbye and thanked her for being such a good little monitor.

The next day, papa took her along with Addie and Ben, to see Mr. Lansing. They had a quiet talk on the side and then they took Beatrice to the kindergarten room so that she could see the children play. It was a great big room, full of small tables, chairs and toys. She was allowed to play in one of the games. The teacher played the piano and the children skipped around the room, holding crossed hands. It was lots of fun. Afterwards, Mr. Lansing said she could come again. She felt very proud and happy as she walked home with papa, holding his hand. And papa said he would take her back if she was a very good girl and that next year she could go every day to play with the children.

After that, she played school every day with her dolls. She was a very strict teacher. They had to be clean, smart and good. If they didn't sit up right, she scolded them. If they did anything wrong, she made them sit in the back seat or sent them to the office where mama was principal. Playing school with real children always ended in a fight. Everyone wanted to be the teacher or the principal. The dolls were much nicer but sometimes Beatrice got tired of talking to them.

There were other games to play with friends. They would watch the big children, then go off by themselves to copy. They chose different places for different games. They played Tag in the backyard, Hide and Seek in the

alley, Potsy on the sidewalk, Follow the Leader on the stairway, Puss in the Corner in the hall and many other games in the house. Her friends were Birdie, Elsie and Edna. The four of them lived in the same house. But when the big children came home from school, Beatrice wouldn't play with her friends. She liked to watch Addie and her friends. Maybe they would let her be an extra-ender for the rope. Even if she couldn't jump, she liked to turn the rope high and join the chant. Till her arm hurt and they sent her away. She didn't care, she liked to be with the big girls. Addie called her a pest and complained to mama. Why does she always have to follow me around? None of the other kids bother their big sisters! She's got her own friends, let her play with them!

She and Addie began to have lots of fights about it. Mama said Addie was too nervous and cranky. Why can't two sisters play together? Look at Birdie and Florence, how nice they get along together. Addie cried and said it wasn't fair. Beatrice tried to please Addie, to do favors for her. When Addie wanted a favor, she would promise to take Beatrice with her somewhere, but when the time came, she would run away on the sly. Then Beatrice would cry. Mama got tired of it; sometimes she made Addie stay in the house to play with Beatrice. Beatrice would let Addie do anything she wanted, even cheat, just so they could be friends. Don't let's fight anymore, Addie, she would plead, wanting them to kiss and make up. Addie acted as though she didn't know what Beatrice was talking about; she thought Beatrice was silly about kisses and promises. She would make a wry face and get annoyed. It made Beatrice unhappy. Things always went wrong and she couldn't understand why.

Addie 's best friend was Pearlie Linder who lived on the top floor. Pearlie was a fat blonde girl with big lips and small eyes. She was always laughing and talking and doing silly things. When she and Addie got together, they started whispering and giggling. They always had secrets. Beatrice didn't like Pearlie; she couldn't see why Addie was friendly with her. Addie was so small and thin next to Pearlie. But Addie liked to go to Pearlie's house. Pearlie had a room all by herself because she was the only girl in the family. She had three brothers. Mrs. Linder was an ugly woman, small as a dwarf, and she had red watery eyes. She always looked tired. It was hard for her to climb the stairs, carrying her shopping bag and bundles all the way up to the fourth floor. Beatrice couldn't imagine how Addie enjoyed eating in her house. And then Addie even started sleeping with Pearlie. The first time, papa was very angry when he found out about it, but mama explained that Mrs. Linder had asked it as a favor because she had to go somewhere and didn't want to leave Pearlie all alone with her brothers. After that, Addie slept in Pearlie's house many more times. Beatrice missed Addie; she thought of them telling each other stories and giggling all night.

She didn't like Mr. Linder very much either. He always winked at her and made funny faces, treating her as though she were a doll. The only one she liked was Pearlie's older brother, Gus. She liked him a whole lot at first. He would stop to talk with her and ask what she was doing and give her candy and be very kind and interested in her games. But once he took her into the alley to show her a new game and somehow they got into the basement. It was very dark in there and the floor was cold. Beatrice didn't like that game; it

wasn't fun. Then he gave her a nickel and said she mustn't tell anybody. That made her afraid he had done something bad. And he acted so worried and made her promise so hard, that she didn't even enjoy the ice cream cone he made her buy with the nickel. And she stopped liking him from then on. Every time she saw him after that, she turned her head away and made believe she didn't see him. And when he asked her on the side if she wouldn't like to play with him again, she told him emphatically no.

It bothered her a whole lot that she had to keep a secret from mama. She was sure it was wrong not to tell, but she was even more afraid of telling. She didn't know why, but she was sure Gus was a bad boy and that he had made her do something bad, too. Then one day she was sitting on a chair, leaning against the entrance door above the stoop and singing, when Gus came along with his friend Percy and stopped in front of her. He put his hands against the back of the chair and wouldn't let her get up. Again he asked her why she wouldn't play with him any more and she got mad when he said something to Percy in a funny language that Ben and his friends called pig-latin, though she didn't understand a word of it, but she could tell it wasn't nice because Percy smiled and his face got red all over, even behind his big eyeglasses, and Gus laughed. Cut it out, Percy said, maybe she knows the code. I do, she exclaimed, her eyes flashing angrily from one to the other. Well then, said Gus, what about it? We'll give you two nickels. She began to kick and bite him, wishing she could straighten the chair so that she could use her hands and nails too. God, what a wild cat, Gus yelled and ran off with Percy. She was filled with anger and hatred, wanted to cry and was afraid to because of mama. If she

could only tell! See Gus punished! But there was no one, no one at all. She would have to keep it to herself, always.

Often and again she was on the verge of telling Addie; the words were on the tip of her tongue. If only she could get Addie to be real friends with her, if Addie would show her in some way that she was really on her side, be a sister whom she could trust - Addie had no patience with her mysterious sentimentalism. Whenever Beatrice started talking about sisters being the best of friends, better and more important than Birdie or Elsie or even Pearlie, Addie would stop whatever they were doing and go away; she wouldn't listen to that silly stuff. Finally, Beatrice gave up. Addie would just turn tattle-tale and stick up for her best friend's brother. So she said nothing and was miserable every time Addie went up to Pearlie's house.

She began going, too, to the houses of her friends. At first mama objected, but Beatrice cried so hard and said what about Addie, you let her go to Pearlie's, that mama had to give in. It was fun playing in somebody else's house; it made everything seem different, even water. She would drink it out of the strange glass and think how different it was from drinking at home. Water had squeezy little bubbles that tickled your mouth when you blew on the rim of the glass. She and Birdie laughed, getting their chins wet. They made parties out of everything. They took a slice of bread, an apple, a bar of chocolate, whatever they could find or their mothers gave them, and divided them into little pieces to make the party last longer. Sometimes they had raisins and nuts and bought a penny's worth of candy; they would parade back and forth in front of the glass showcases, asking Mr. Brooks how many for a penny. Then they would hurry into the house, set two plates and begin their

party. In the bedroom they would play mother and child, in the bathroom doctor and patient, in the dining-room Mr. and Mrs. The games shifted from room to room. In a single morning, they took turns being iceman, gas collector, insurance agent, salesman, teacher, housewife, doctor and just neighbor. Beatrice thought it was fun being so many people; she enjoyed imitating their voices, the way they walked and looked.

With Elsie she made a game of looking in at store windows. They guessed what object the other was looking at, found things belonging to different colors. The fruit store was nice, the vegetables like flowers. Shaped like a stick and yellow, meant a banana. Round as a ball and juicy, meant orange if it was sweet and lemon if it was sour. Just to say lemon or think lemon made Beatrice's mouth pucker and her tongue wet. The barber pole fascinated them. No matter how you looked at the twisted red and white stripes, they seemed to be moving, now running up, now down.

How wonderful everything was! Full of magic and surprise. Like the images that grew on the walls and bathroom tiles. All you had to do was stare and suddenly there it was: a face, an animal, a tree, a mask. And even after you saw the scratches and spots on the walls, the little white squares outlined in black on the floor, the images came back and stayed right in front of your eyes. And at dusk, odd shadows crept through the windows and along the ceiling. They were the wind dressed in a hundred disguises, but you could never see its face or what it really looked like. It was the wind and it moved in a hundred ways.

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It seemed she had many relatives. She called everyone aunt or uncle or cousin. Of all, she liked Uncle Nathan and Aunt Ethel least. They lived in a

dirty house full of stale smells. The first time she went there, she saw cockroaches in the kitchen sink and on the wall and thirsty as she was she wouldn't take a drink. She almost dropped the glass, and ran back to mama. Nor would she eat anything Aunt Ethel offered her. She wasn't hungry, she said. Mama seemed to understand; she didn't seem to like being there either. Uncle Nathan was papa's half-brother; they both called Grandma Theresa mother. They didn't look like brothers. Uncle Nathan was already old; his shoulders stooped and he hardly talked. Beatrice was glad papa dressed so neatly and even if he didn't have much hair, at least he looked clean shaven. As for Aunt Ethel, she looked even worse; her hair stuck out all over, her dress was loose and creased, she sat with her feet out and twiddled her thumbs,her voice was hoarse; she looked altogether sloppy. She had a large family; some of them were married and had children too.

Beatrice couldn't keep track of all the names and faces she met at Aunt Ethel's. The only one she was sure of was Bea, who was the youngest in the family and about her own age. Bea had kinky straw-colored hair, pale skin and watery grey eyes. Bea was quiet, dumb-looking and lifeless, just like a big stupid doll. Beatrice was very disappointed in her cousin. When mama had told her that she had a cousin who was about her own age, she had expected to find a real friend, someone with whom she could play and have a lot of fun. Instead, her cousin was just a blonde stupid doll who sat near her mother and didn't move. Nettie, a sister about Addie's age, was much nicer. Nettie was pretty, jolly, full of mischief. Beatrice was glad to have Nettie as her cousin. She wished Nettie and Bea could change places, then she would be sure to have a friend. Her next wish was that Nettie could take Pearlie's

place and be Addie's best friend, but Aunt Ethel's house was too far away for that.

She began to meet friends of the family, too. One was a very pretty lady who called mama Caroline. It was the first time Beatrice heard mama called that. Papa always called her Katie and when he was feeling good he called her Katie-girl and started to sing K-K-K Katie, one of Addie's new songs. Beatrice thought Caroline was a much prettier name than Katie; it suited mama just right. She asked mama why papa had changed her name. He says it's more stylish, she answered, laughing. Mama called the pretty lady Tabby and said they were old friends from childhood. Tabby was dressed in a black silk suit with a white waist underneath and she carried a fur scarf over her arm. When she put it around her shoulders, a bush tail came down on one side and a little animal's head peeped out on the other. Beatrice wished mama had one like that. She liked Tabby's pocketbook and white gloves, too. Tabby said she and mama used to be taken for sisters because they looked so much alike. Beatrice looked from one to the other, unable to make up her mind. It was the first time she had met anyone prettier than mama. She noticed the gold fillings in mama's teeth. Tabby told her that mama had been the prettiest girl in the village where they had grown up together and that all the girls had been jealous when mama was made Queen of the Festivals. I nearly cried my eyes out, she admitted goodnaturedly.

Yes, mama sighed, but times have changed; I couldn't win a beauty prize at a dog show today. Tabby laughed and patted her hand. You should talk, look what you've got - I swear she's the image of you, Caroline. Beatrice blushed, feeling proud.

Another day she met some of papa's old friends. It was funny hearing them call each other by their first names. Jimmy Martel was a tall slim man; he joked a lot and made papa laugh. Nobody else talked to papa like that. Jimmy must have guessed what she was thinking because he slapped his knee and said, say kid, I knew him when! And he showed her with his hand that high from the floor. His wife Lottie was a kind faced lady with grey wavy hair. She talked quietly with mama and didn't seem to pay much attention to her husband's jokes. Then Jimmy started to tease her and she turned to Beatrice and said, boys never grow up, not even when they're men,isn't that true, Caroline? Mama admitted they hadn't changed much, those two. Beatrice noticed that when Jimmy was still for a moment and listening to some one else, he tapped his fingers and kept crossing and uncrossing his legs, as though he wanted to jump up and move around a bit.

Meeting Tabby and the Martels made Beatrice even more interested in mama's stories about that time Long Before, especially when there was soup, because she didn't like soup and mama had to tell her a story in order for her to eat it. And mama was patient; she liked to remember and tell stories. About Grandpa Albert's inn where many people used to stop overnight on their travels, about the big farm where they kept horses and cattle and chickens, about the nice little village in Europe where she had grown up. And mama would describe the village with its white washed houses and narrow dirt streets and the little school where she had learned to read and write and sew. The people got their water out of a big well. They cooked on charcoal stoves. They made everything they ate and wore. They built their own houses, painted their dirt

floors, wove their cotton and wool cloth, crocheted curtains and linens, did everything themselves. And then mama would tell about Grandpa, how big he was and strong, and such a good kind man, the way he loved animals and treated people with respect, even children. He was never too busy to stop for a word or a pat on the head, and give a helping hand. Everybody loved him, God bless him. And mama's eyes teared as she murmured, may his soul rest in peace. Beatrice made mama tell the story about his dog over again; she loved that one best of all. And mama told about what a wonderful dog Rosh was, so big and smart, and how he loved Grandpa and went with him wherever he went, and how one day Grandpa tied him up in the barn behind the house because he was going on a very long trip and couldn't take the dog with him, and how the dog yelped and cried a whole day and night after Grandpa left, and thenGrandma took pity on him and let him out of the barn, because she thought it was safe by then to let him loose. Well, that dog began to run, I'm telling you, like a wild wolf. But what was the use? Grandma knew that Grandpa was already far, far away. So she thought the dog would come back again soon. But he didn't. He ran and ran, smelled this way and that way. Imagine, Grandpa had taken a horse, then a train, then another horse; he had crossed a big river. Why, it was like to the other end of the world! And still that dog followed, followed, followed, without stopping, without eating, without sleeping, until he caught up with Grandpa! For a while, Grandpa could hardly believe his eyes. How could this be Rosh, his dog? A sick, skinny, dirty dog, it was impossible! And so far from home. Four days he had travelled to that place, been there two, and was ready to go back home. And now here was this dog jumping on him, licking his hands

and face, barking! Who else could it be but Rosh? I'm telling you, Grandpa almost fainted. He took the dog in his arms and cried without shame. To think that a dog should love him so much! Why had he left him behind? A big strong beautiful dog like that to become like this. Mama had to stop; she hid her face behind a corner of her apron till she found her handkerchief. When she looked up, her nose was red, and Beatrice was sobbing quietly through opened mouth. The soup plate was empty, forgotten, the rest of the meal postponed. We cry here, almost twenty years later. So you can imagine how Grandpa felt. After all, what is a dog? A dumb animal. He's not supposed to have much sense, a heart like a person, a soul. He's a brute, a beast, a-a creature, with four legs and a tail! Can he think, talk? How can we know what's going on inside a dog's head, how he feels? You see, we don't know. Grandpa thought he would look him up for a day or two and then, when he came back, he would whistle and the dog would run to him. But the dog, did he think that? How could he understand that it was only a trip, that Grandpa was coming back? He ran! He followed! Where his master was, that's where he had to be. And so he got sick and thin and before Grandpa could get him back to the house on his horse, he died. Is it any wonder? That he lasted till he found Grandpa, over rivers and mountains and who knows what else! A miracle and nothing else. He died, repeated Beatrice incredulously, her throat tight with tears and repressed whimpers. Poor Grandpa, poor dog! And for a long while after the story, she kept asking questions, trying to discover where the mistake had been made. It just happened that way, that's all, mama concluded, and wisdom and sorrow met in a sigh.

But not all of mama's stories were sad because she remembered many happy

things, too, like the French professor who made love to her and wanted to marry her, and the time she sneaked out of the house to go to a dance when there was a big fair in the village, and what fun she had at the mardi gras festivals in honor of the Queen, Carmen Sylva, and how nice it was to go on long vacation visits to be with her married sisters and brothers, and also to the home of a very rich aunt who had no children and wanted to adopt her. And time would recede into a Yesterday that was Long Ago for Beatrice and for mama and for all those before them, for the many living and the many dead, for faces and names and places and happenings remembered and recalled, and Beatrice knew there was no end to the many stories of the many lives she had not lived. And always she asked for more, her mind full of questions of this so big, so far, so long ago time of living. Because mama had been a little girl like Beatrice, then like Addie, and Grandpa had been a little boy like Ben, then like papa, and there were still more mamas and papas, uncles and aunts, cousins and friends, sisters and brothers, all sons and daughters who had been children once, then the mamas and papas of their children, and then the grandmas and grandpas of their children's children.

Beatrice wondered about it for a long time, till one day she asked mama how she had come to marry papa. When did they meet? Did she marry him right away? And then mama told her how they all grew up as children, she and Tubby and Jimmy and papa and Lottie and many other boys and girls, and how they went to school and played together and were friends, and then visited each other even after they moved away with their families and became separated. You see, papa became a salesman and whenever he passed through a town near our village, he came to visit us for a day or two. I didn't know I was going to marry

him, then. I was just a young girl, sixteen, seventeen, grandpa was still alive, I was the only child left, I didn't even dream of getting married. Why should I? What was my hurry? I had a good home, plenty to eat, nice clothes. What more does a girl need, when she has her parents to look after her? And such parents! Mama paused to remember them and a soft light came into her eyes. She took a deep breath. And you heard what Tabby said, how pretty I was. I could have had any boy in the whole village just by lifting my little finger. You think papa was the only one? And from mama's voice and the look on her face, Beatrice could tell papa was not, but mama said that was another story for another time.

Beatrice never stopped thinking about mama's stories and often wished she could have been there, a part of them. But mama said she had, in a way, because she was part of herself and papa, grandma and grandpa, great grandma and great grandpa, and all the other grandmas and grandpas on both sides. And Beatrice would close her eyes and try to imagine how everything had really happened to her, but it was very hard because there were so many people in so many places and it was all so long ago and far away and she was only a little girl.

Then Mrs. Singer had a new baby and Beatrice was allowed to come in and see him and she thought it was very funny to be so small, all curled up like a ball and wrapped in a blanket. Mrs. Singer let her come over to the bed to see him; he was lying under the white cover. It was a funny wrinkled baby, very pink, with red spots on his head, and his eyes were tightly closed. Beatrice hoped Dr. Rausch hadn't made a mistake, because the baby didn't look like Mr. Singer or Mrs. Singer or Birdie or Florence or Jerry. But Mrs. Singer

looked very happy and called him her darling baby, her sonny boy, her Alex-life. The other children thought it was very funny the way she fed the baby milk and they kept looking at each other and giggling. And one day, Florence and Birdie called Beatrice into the dining-room to show her a small cardboard tube they had found in the top drawer of the buffet, and they opened it and asked her to taste the pink stick inside. It was a nice sweet taste and she asked what it was. That was to make the baby want to feed a lot and to get fat, they whispered, laughing behind their hands. Beatrice told them they were bad to play with it, because she knew where Mrs. Singer used it, and they got scared and put it back in the drawer, begging her not to tell on them.

And then time's wheel came to a sudden halt; Tanta Mutter's three months in Europe had passed and one day she was back, but oh, so changed! How old she looked! Her hair had turned completely grey and now when she sat or walked there was a round stoop behind her shoulders. Beatrice recognized her with a shock. Mama said Tanta Mutter had been very sick. The aunt-mother cried and trembled when she leaned down to kiss her.

Beatrice sat stiffly, unable to move. Next to her, a big doll with long blonde curls leaned back inside a shiny black carriage, hers. It was the present Tanta Mutter had promised to bring her from Europe. But she dared not leave the room, feeling it would not be right to make Tanta Mutter think she had forgotten all about her. So she sat and looked at the doll out of a corner of her eye and listened as Tanta Mutter talked about her family and friends in Europe and about the trouble she had come home to because of George. I haven't the heart to live any more, she said. I wish I had died with your

Uncle Henry. But I wanted to see the old country once more. What for? The world I know and belonged to is gone, gone. They've killed it off, destroyed it. Those poor suffering people, ah you don't know, you don't know. French and German phrases slipped from her tongue and faded into silence. War, said mama. Yes, war, repeated Tanta Mutter, and now George with this girl. Is that what I've lived to see? Mama wouldn't let her talk like that. A woman like you who has known the best of life: education, travel, wealth, raised six children. You're just tired, that's all. Tanta Mutter smiled as though from a distance and her eyes grew wistful. Mama asked her to talk about her visit to the Holy Land, to tell what it was like. Tanta Mutter's pessimism wrapped Palestine in her gloom. Better if the Red Sea had swallowed us all up. Better if all our people had disappeared. The Jews, the chosen children of God. So that we can be the last to die? Why must we wait so long? Like me, I'm old, used up, and still - Mama sent Beatrice out of the room with her doll carriage.

It was the biggest and most beautiful doll she had ever seen. It was bigger than Mrs. Singer's new baby. She was afraid to take it out of the doll carriage, to hold it in her arms. Suddenly, she felt unhappy. It was so beautiful, she didn't know what to do with it. All her other dolls looked shabby and unimportant next to it, like the Beatrice she had been up to that day. For she felt that a change had come over her, that she was bigger, older. She couldn't play with her little dolls anymore. For more than an hour, she just sat and looked at her new self, wondering if she had changed as much as Tanta Mutter. What was it, what had happened, why was Tanta Mutter so sad? It was as though her heart had shrivelled and dried, like a leaf ready to blow away. Beatrice thought about the long pauses between breathing, the slow silence and darkness

within, and she thought yes, that is how you die, alone inside with nothing. And she looked at her beautiful new doll and thought of the tired old lady in the next room and fiercely, passionately, she clutched the doll in her arms and lifted it to her own young beating heart. Tanta Mutter had moved out of her street and out of her life. Her fears had been confirmed: it would never be the same again, never. Somewhere in her mind, someday in her time file, she knew that Tanta Mutter would die. But coming as it would, that dark silence, to an old tired lady, it was intelligible.

She named her doll Tamu, keeping it a secret that the doll was named for Tanta Mutter, because mama had said people never named their children after the living but always after those they loved who had died so that they could go on living afterwards. Beatrice thought Tamu was a very pretty name and that her doll was a very nice way for Tanta Mutter to be remembered. She would take very good care of it always, so that Tanta Mutter could go on living even after she died. In Tamu, an old tired lady would find a new life, forever young and beautiful, without tears or sadness; it would be a doll's life, delicate and changeless, cared for and kind. Tamu, Tamu, Tamu, she whispered, thrilling to the name, the new identity, their bond already intimate and secret between them.

She became very serious. A small frown settled between her eyes. They grew dark with questioning, two black orbs pierced by pinpoints of light. They were her entry ports to the world. Small ports. She frowned.

She was an island surrounded by a sea of lives, stretching over an area no map could chart. Like a lighthouse watching the water by day, flashing its beacon lights by night, searching the horizon for passing ships, sending

signals to guide them in, Beatrice looked out on her world. Time's wheel stood on the shore, drawing the waves, revolving.

Here was home, with mama and papa and Addie and Ben. Connected with it was a house on a street in a neighborhood full of other people's homes and houses. House had back and front, street had two sides, corners led to other streets. Here meant all that was close: stairway, hall, roof and stoop, the third floor, the alley, the back yard, the stores; and even more close, the kitchen, the bathroom, the rocking chair, the table. Knowing the gas light, the fish on the wall, the height of the sink and the shapes in the windows. Aware of the sound, smell, taste and touch: mama singing, sighing, busy; Ben cutting up papers, making a boat; Addie at the piano or trying on clothes; papa dozing or counting up bills.

This the familiar, the everyday, the way: Birdie full of freckles, her eyes deep set; Edna squinting when she chewed her nails; Ed Lindor's lisp, Peter Hill's giggles, the dainty primness of plain Elsie Stone. Then the sweet potato cart, the policeman's whistle, the milk wagon's rumble and the horses' clop-clop, the ice man's truck and the rasp-splitting pick, the gas meter man, the insurance collector, the fruitman's call and the ~~and the~~ I Cash Clothes, the street cleaner's brush and the doctor's satchel, the fire engine's scream, the ambulance clang, the nurses coming and going twice a day.

And there and that: where the train goes up or the train goes down, where the stores are for furniture and hats and shoes, where the boulevard is with not so many houses, and many people walking and movies and restaurants, where the park is for parties and across the way the school, where George has his office with the big tooth outside, where Aunt Ethel lives and near her the

Bronleys, and wherever she has been and whatever she has seen and anything at all that she remembers, even places she hasn't been but knows about and faces she hasn't seen but expects to find, and the whole of time Before when she wasn't there, and all the lives she hasn't lived and the many other worlds without ending.

And here and this and there and that and it's such a big, big world and she's so little. And she frowns, perturbed.

Then the weather changes, not always the same. Sometimes it rains, sometimes it shines. The house is bright, then dark and still. When you go to bed, it's like that too. And then you may change your clothes next day. There are special clothes for holidays and mama says it's cold. Sweater, coat, woolen scarf, rubbers, and underneath, the flannel drawers that button to your shirt. And you like the morning air and the street posts at night. It snows, and the light falls softly; it makes a ring around the lamps outside. Ben has a sled and he takes you for a ride and you watch him run and fly down the hill; then he comes up panting and goes down again and you wave and jump and shout for joy. And there are days and weeks and months and it's hard to keep them straight, but you like it best when the children are at home. And sometimes there are holidays with special things to eat and candles on the table and mama dressed up and papa drinking wine. Then one day it's warm and mama lets you out without a coat and you're dressed in white with a big hair ribbon. There's a man and a pony. Would you like to have a picture? And the man puts you on the pony and you're not sure it's right, then he says, see the birdie, but there's nothing there but a box in the air. But anyway, mama likes the picture and she gives the man some money. Beatrice with a frown - forever - all dressed in white and sitting on a pony, and now she wishes she had stayed on the pony and taken a ride up the street, giddap.

Easter came with a big bouquet of flowers, though mama said it was a waste of money and papa said never mind, I want you to have them, and mama was very proud to have them on the table when company came in to visit. Beatrice loved her pink taffeta coat and hat that mama made with daisies on the crown and on the two pockets. Even Addie said she looked beautiful because papa had bought Addie a blue velvet outfit with a white ermine pocketbook. Ben grinned when he came in wearing his new serge suit with the pants below his knees; he looked like a big boy and he was very happy. Papa looked him over very carefully, trying not to smile, but all he said was there wasn't another father like him and he hoped Ben was worth it. That made Ben's mouth twist sideways; he didn't like to be told such things. It made him feel like a sissy. He would have to watch out not to tear his stockings or get dirt on his clothes. So he sat down and sucked his thumb, holding the end of his tie over his mouth.

It was a very nice Easter. Everybody went around showing off their new clothes and there were lots of good things to eat in everybody's house. That night, mama had a big holiday dinner and Beatrice was allowed to stay up until the angel came in to drink some wine. Then she went to bed, trying to decide what present she would ask papa for, because she had hidden the prayer bread. And Addie and Ben were home from school a whole week and the streets were full of children all day long and Beatrice hated to leave the street and go upstairs, though Birdie and Florence and Elsie and Edna came to visit her and she went to visit them in their houses, too.

Then the days got longer and the sun was warmer and the air smelled green and Addie said there was going to be a big May Party for all the children on the street. Francine Goodman was going to be the queen. She was one of the

very big girls, really a young lady because she went walking with boys and was very grown up. It was she who started the idea by saying, why shouldn't we have a May Party, some of the other neighborhoods are, and she got all of her friends to help. They went around and got all the mothers to promise costumes for their children and contributions for the May Day picnic. They even collected enough money to have a band. Everybody became interested and excited. There was a May Pole with streamers for a big dance, and flags and banners to march with, and best of all a big float for the May Queen, decorated with colored paper flowers. Each house was given a numbered place in the parade line-up and the children were to march in sized groups.

Mama made Addie a Gypsy costume. She had a red blouse and a blue skirt and a yellow sash and a scarf around her head to match the sash. To look like a real Gypsy, she wore beads and bracelets and earrings, and she carried a castanet in her hand to shake when she walked. Beatrice was a flower girl. She had a cardboard crown trimmed with flowers and flowers sewed to her dress and shoes. The flower girls were to walk in front of the Queen's float and drop paper petals all the way to the park. Ben just had a paper hat and a bow pinned on his shirt because none of the boys wanted to wear costumes like the girls did.

It was a lovely day and by eleven o'clock the parade got started. Francine sat in the float and smiled and waved to everybody. With her red hair and green eyes, she looked very beautiful. The band was up front and when it began playing, the big boys lifted the float on their shoulders and everybody cheered. The small children marched in rows of four behind the band. The big children marched behind the float. The May Pole came last; it was very tall and the streamers had to be held up by the rear traffic guard. All the mothers walked along the sidewalk, carrying the picnic baskets.

The walk took a long time because there were many streets to cross and there was a long hill to go up and down. When they got to the park, everybody ran over the big lawn where the May Pole was to be put. Then the float was set down and Francine made a speech. When she finished, all the mothers laughed and clapped, while the children yelled hooray! After that, the girls did a dance around the May Pole and sang some songs. The boys went off to play in the park; they had games and contests. Later, everybody sat down under the trees to have their picnic lunch. But soon the boys started running around with caterpillars and the girls screamed whenever they came near and then a fight began and one of the little boys fell down and hurt himself. Babies cried and mothers yelled and it got noisier by the minute until the party began to break up. Mama had to call Ben a few times before he would come, but at last he did and the family started home with some of the neighbors. Mama told Mrs. Goodman she was glad they didn't have a party every day and Mrs. Goodman laughed good-naturedly, saying it was a lot of work and very tiring but after all, the kids had enjoyed themselves. Mama stopped off on the way to have pictures taken of Beatrice and Addie, so that papa could see how nice they looked in their costumes. Everybody said it was a wonderful party and that they would have another one next year and they didn't stop talking about it for days. It was something to remember.

Then, one Saturday, mama said Addie could take Beatrice to the movies because she and papa had to go somewhere and Ben said, what about me, and mama said, you too, and it was fun getting money to spend on the movies and ice cream afterwards. It was the first time they were going to the movies and they were

all excited. They walked very fast, Beatrice holding Addie and Ben by the hand, and everytime they crossed a street they raised her off the ground and ran to the opposite curb because they were worried they might get to the movies too late. Then when they got there, the ticket seller said Addie was too young to buy the tickets and they didn't know what to do because they had the money and mama and papa wouldn't be home and they didn't want to go back. But a lady came along and said she would take them in and she looked so nice and had such a friendly smile that Addie gave her all the money she had, till Ben whispered, what about our ice cream, and then Addie looked scared, but the lady gave her change and they all went in together and it was all right.

At first it was light inside and they could see all the empty seats. A man was sitting up front behind a piano and every once in a while he looked around. There was a lot of talking and laughing and almost everyone was eating popcorn and peanuts. A boy in a white hat and apron went up and down the aisles with a basket, selling things. Children stood on their seats and called to him,holding up their coins. When he came near their row Ben whispered, let's buy some, Addie, and for a nickel they got a big box of popcorn with a little ring inside which exactly fitted Beatrice's finger.

They sat right in the middle of the middle row because the lady told Addie those were the best seats. A fat man stuck his head out of a side curtain on the stage and the children began to whistle, stamp and clap; he waved at them and shouted O. K. to someone in the back. Then the lights went out and it got very dark. That made everybody yell and boo and Beatrice slipped her hand into Addie's. Suddenly a big white light flashed on the stage and the

piano began to play. After that came the movies; they flickered and changed very fast and when there was print to read Addie whispered what it said to Beatrice and Ben. It was a western thriller, full of horses and shooting. The children cheered and hissed and Ben joined in, explaining who was the good guy and who the bad guy. And then, just at the best part, the movie stopped and the lights came on. It was a mean surprise and everybody showed their disappointment, but it was a serial and they would have to wait till next week for the story to continue. Beatrice said they would have to come back and Ben said, gee I hope so. After that came a very funny picture that made everybody laugh. Beatrice thought the actress in that picture was very pretty, though the fat man and the skinny one took up most of the time doing silly things.

When they came out of the movies, the street looked very strange and different. It was hard to believe it was day time and their eyes squinted. They kept talking about the movies all the time they sat in the ice cream parlor. They had big sodas at the counter and Ben made a lot of noise with his straws, though Addie told him to stop or she wouldn't take him to the movies again. She acted very grown up, as though she were mama, and Beatrice told her so. Addie tossed her head and said well, they'd have to be good and obey her or she wouldn't take them anymore. Mama was waiting for them when they got home and she seemed glad to see them. She asked if they had been good and Addie gave them a special look as though she couldn't make up her mind, so Ben said, sure, we had a swell time, and asked if they could go next Saturday and every week, and mama smiled and said, we'll see.

Beatrice thought about the movies all week. Everything became black and white in her mind. She thought about the actress and how she acted and moved,

and soon she began acting, too. WhenAddie played the piano, she acted something to go with the music. Then she started acting her songs, making her hands and face go with the words. And when she danced, she tried to make a picture by imagining she was somebody doing something. Addie laughed at her. Who do you think you are, she asked, but Beatrice could tell Addie was jealous. Let me see you do it, if you think you're so smart, she answered, but Addie couldn't because she was so stiff and awkward. And Beatrice kept on acting and dancing and singing the new way.

And once when there was company and mama said, how about some entertainment, Beatrice fixed up a program with Addie. She wanted to wear a costume but papa said, never mind, so she went into mama's room, pulled the green portieres together to make it look like a real act, found a shawl to put around her shoulders, then gave Addie the signal to begin. Addie was to play the introduction twice, then Beatrice was to swing open the portieres and bow, and after the third introduction - After, she cried, stamping her foot because Addie started the song before. And she shut the portieres and made Addie start over, calling, three times, don't forget now! Then she came out and bowed again and this time they started together right. Mickey was the first number because that was mama's favorite. <u>With your hair a raven's hue, with your smiling so beguiling, there's a pretty balarney, pretty killarney too</u> .... she spread her hair over her hand, smiled her prettiest, shook her finger teasingly. <u>Childhood, out in the wildwood, like a mountain flower you grew</u> .... she called through cupped hands, ran a few steps, bent downand grew. <u>Do you blame anyone for falling in love with you</u> - I do!...She finished pertly, adding the last two words

for surprise. Everyone clapped and mama hugged her, saying she was her own pretty Mickey. That reminded Mrs. Singer of Abie's Irish Rose and she started talking about the play. Beatrice disappeared behind the portieres to get ready for her second number. It was a dance she had made up for one of Addie's piano lesson pieces and she waved the shawl as she whirled around, shook her head and stamped her feet. Papa chuckled, saying he didn't know where she got it from, and it made Beatrice proud because papa had never seen her dance before. Mrs. Singer sat back and nodded politely, her mouth twitching: nobody else made a fuss over their children in front of company, only the Bergers. As soon as she could, she took up the conversation where she had left off: that Abie's Irish Rose was some play, such talent!

It was hard for Beatrice to decide out loud whom she loved more, papa or mama. Whenever anyone asked her, she answered, both the same, because she knew she should and that was the right answer. And even to herself she didn't want to admit it was mama she loved more because she felt it was wrong. She told herself she loved papa just as much as mama, but in a different way. Then she wasn't really lying or being bad, and everybody was satisfied. Just as much, but different, because she was afraid of papa. He didn't like to kiss and play with her like mama did. He was always too busy or lying down or just getting up or just ready to eat or something else. Unless there was company in the house, he wanted it quiet: during meals, while he napped, while he read the paper, while he worked - it had to be quiet.

He was very strict, Beatrice decided. Not only with her, but with Addie and Ben, too. He looked at their homework and school papers every night, and

sometimes he made them do their lessons over, showing them their mistakes. He was very smart. He knew just how the teachers liked children's work to look. Writing had to be neat and clear and even, the spelling perfect. Numbers had to be straight, the arithmetic examples in ruled-off boxes. Nothing less than 100% was good. If they didn't get A's on their report cards, he went to school to find out why. He made them study hard. They had to practice their music lessons every day, too, and once a week he asked their music teachers how Ben was doing on the violin, how Addie was getting along on the piano. Mama had to take Ben's part and say half an hour a day was enough because he didn't want to take any violin lessons at all. Addie had to practice an hour; she did, with the clock in front of her.

Beatrice sighed; she couldn't understand papa's love. In some ways, he was so good to them: bought them nice presents, gave them spending money, took a great deal of interest in their clothes. And yet. She never knew what to expect. Sometimes she guessed wrong and then the surprise and the disappointment would get all mixed up inside of her and she would begin to choke. Suddenly, a gasp would well up from her throat in a flood of tears.

It happened so quickly that mama would jump up startled, saying, what's the matter, what did you say to her, Max? And papa would get angry or exasperated or shrug his shoulders, not knowing why she was crying or what she wanted from him anyhow.

She might be chatting to him about her doll or asking him something about what Addie said or Ben, or come running toward him with an idea in her eyes, when he would say, all right now, go and play, or, will you please leave me alone, or simply with a wave of his hand say, sh! And each time, his look or his

voice or what she wanted that wasn't there would stop her breath, fill her with confusion, and bring on a hysterical spluttor of coughs, hiccups and sobs. And she couldn't explain it to mama or make papa understand how hurt she was.

It began to happen so often, that he finally threatened to give her a real excuse for crying. Mama tried to soothe her, to scold her. She made Beatrice stand still and catch her breath, then told her to ask papa's pardon and say she was sorry. Because it looked as though she had no reason for crying at all. But after all the tears and the fuss and the quarrel that sometimes started between papa and mama because of her, with everything having gone wrong, the apology and make-up kiss were no good. They didn't mean anything after all the hurt was done.

She tried not to cry. Then, when she couldn't keep it back any more, the trying not-to made the crying so much worse. She became trouble and unhappy; if she loved papa as much as mama, then why did she have to cry? She rehearsed what she would say next time it happened and then forgot, standing wordless and unhappy before him.

At last he could bear it no longer. He held her by the elbows, made her control her sobs, then forced her to tell him why she always cried. Because you never let me sit on your lap! she blubbered and started to cry again. But now her crying was of a different kind, not because of her own hurt and not because she was afraid. It was papa's hurt that made her cry. He just looked at mama, bit his bottom lip and didn't know what to say. Were those tears in papa's eyes? He started to stroke her hair, could think of nothing in reply, then got up and walked away. And from the quiet way he walked, with his back

towards her, Beatrice could tell he was sorry, that he couldn't help it. Did he love her? She didn't know. Maybe in his own way, too. It was no one's fault. It just had to be that way. And she couldn't understand. It was a terrible way.

Mama assured her that papa loved her; the child's worry was just one amongst all the worries she had; she put it aside, too busy with things she had to do to bother with those she couldn't. Papa was papa just as Max was Max and there was nothing anyone could do about it. Didn't she know? Then what use was it for a child to trouble her little head about him and cry her heart out? It was like trying to fight City Hall, to change papa. You might as well bang your head against the wall, for all the good it would do.

On a Friday evening, the family sat around the dining-room table, finishing an early dinner. Papa looked at his watch and told mama to hurry the demi-tasse because they ought to get started. They'll wait, mama said, and began to clear the table. Beatrice stiffened in her chair, seeing Mr. Ludlow's face leering at her out of the bread plate; she shivered as his hands ran over her chest and back. She drew back from the table.

I'm not going - her words made a small sound in the room. Papa looked up doubtfully, as though someone had tapped him on the shoulder. Mama came in with two small cups of black coffee. Papa lifted his cup, was about to say something, then blew on the brim and took a sip. He drank it slowly, letting the silence settle his meal. When he finished, he pushed back his chair and got up.

All right, children, get dressed. I'm ready, Katie. He looked at his watch again, carefully. And you, miss, he called, pointing his watch at Beatrice,

don't take too long, I want to be there by eight sharp.

She stalked out, her lips compressed. Addie went to the bathroom to wash, Ben started to undress, mama rinsed off the last of the dishes, Beatrice remained in the doorway of her bedroom, shaking. She would't go, that's all, she didn't care - she ran to the kitchen. Please, ma, I don't want to go! Her voice was shrill, desperate. Papa looked in, his face stern. Oh ma, don't let him make me! She threw her arms around mama's apron and hid her head. Instinctively,mama pressed her close.

Now look here, Katie, I'm in no mood for jokes! There was a warning in his voice.

All right, mama exclaimed, don't get so excited! Come, Beatrice darling, we've got an appointment, go get dressed like a good girl. Beatrice raised her head quickly, her eyes frantic with fear. Even mama didn't understand.

No, she cried fiercely, I won't go! I rather be hit! I don't care! I knew you'd hit me if I didn't go, but I rather be hit, I rather! I - won't - go - She staggered towards papa, and bending her body over, offered herself for punishment. He seized her and shook her.

Are you going to obey me and get dressed, or aren't you? His words whipped off his tongue, angrily. Mama rushed to separate them and was pushed against the wall. Now Katie keep out of this or so help me I won't be responsible! He unloosened his belt and forced Beatrice into the bedroom. Addie and Ben hurried out. The door shut. One more chance, he shouted, are you or are you not going to get dressed? The tip of the belt flicked her wrist.

Max, Max, mama screamed, pushing the door open, wait, she'll go! The belt cut the air and landed behind her on the floor.

All right, he yelled, take her and to hell with you! Not even five years old and already she dares to disobey me! What am I to expect ten years from now? You call yourself her mother! All right, then let her stay home! But she stays alone, do you hear? Trembling and furious, he grabbed mama and took her out of the room, slamming the door behind them.

Beatrice threw herself on her pillow, feeling its coolness against her hot, wet face. Spasms of relief waved over her body, bringing comfort inside. When her breath returned to longer intervals of evenness, she was utterly exhausted. The door opened timidly. Ma sent me with water, Ben whispered. Don't you worry, I'll give you a big ride on my bike tomorrow, see if I won't. He patted her head as she drank. It's all right, we'll be home soon, don't be afraid.

I'm not, I'm not afraid! Oh ma! And she turned back to her pillow, too tired to find more tears for her hurt.

She heard them leaving, mama's and papa's voices, sounding back and forth, and then the door shut. She was alone. She grew frightened. The house was so dark and quiet. Quickly, she took off her clothes, pulled out her nightgown from under the pillow and climbed into it against the wall, then crouched down with the cover over her head. She heard strange noises, squeaks, rustling sounds, lifted a corner of her cover to see if she was still in her own bed in her own room, saw lights across the alley from the opposite house, heard laughter and voices, wondered who was upstairs, next door, across the way, listened for burglars creeping on the fire-escape, saw shadows peering at her from the clothes hanger and window curtains, imagined someone under her bed, in the closet - she waited, perspiring, until she fell asleep, thinking it was wrong to

hate papa, that she shouldn't have given mama so much trouble, that she was a bad girl and had sinned, that God would punish her when she was thirteen. But how could she have gone? She hadn't meant to be bad; it was just that they didn't understand. Gradually, all doubts and misgivings disappeared. She became a heroine. How brave she was to take a licking and stay at home all by herself! Even papa's strap hadn't scared her. And she hadn't gone! Nobody had helped her; she had done it all by herself.

And at the Ludlow's, a few blocks away, the talk was all of her, Addie thinking, knowing she wouldn't have dared, Ben scowling, grinning, what a girl, just like a boy, let anyone call him sissy tomorrow for taking Bee on his bike handles, he'd show'em, with his fists!

Why, good Lord, don't you know, I - I could have taken her along in a second, of course. But can you imagine, a baby like that? Papa chuckled, catching mama's anxious eye. All right, Katie, relax. You see how she wants to spoil her kid? Let her feel scared, it'll do her good! Daring to, can you imagine, at that age, why good Lord! And he shook his head, feeling his power intact.

Please, Max, the children are tired, let's go home, mama repeated, watching him finish his fourth glass of wine. It had been a hard day; there was no satisfaction or reward at the end.

They found Beatrice asleep, wisps of her hair peeping up above the cover. The children were cautioned to go to bed quietly. When they had finished their milk, mama tucked them in snugly, cleaned up the wash basin, then wearily took herself to bed. Papa was already asleep. She was glad.

For a long while after that evening, Beatrice was sure she heard creepy noises, saw moving shadows. Especially at night. Even with the family sitting

around her. She signalled to mama, pointed down the hall, tried to whisper. Papa's law during meal times had become: when you eat, you don't talk, you can't do both. She grew restless, began to fidget in her chair. At last mama understood. Max, please take a look in the children's bedroom. Beatrice hears footsteps. It won't take a minute. Mama turned to get the dish of potatoes.

I'll go, ma! Ben volunteered. Boogey man, huh? A glass of water tipped over on the bread plate, as he rushed out. Addie's eyes flashed around the table, then came to rest on Beatrice's face insinuatingly. Fraidy cat! Nothing there! What a baby! Ben swung into his seat manfully, proudly, and saw the overturned glass.

Damn it all, papa said, striking the table and flinging his napkin across it; he got up and left the room, his steps heavy with anger. They all began to cry, first Addie, then mama, then Beatrice, then Ben.

Sh, children, please, said mama ashamed, you know papa doesn't like to be upset when he eats. Clean up, get another plate of bread and everything will be all right again. She went out to placate him.

My God, Katie, can't they sit still at the table? This one starts to choke, that one spills water, the other one doesn't want to eat - honestly, I can't stand it! Once a day, a man sits down with his family; he's tired; he wants some quiet, some peace! Mama's voice interrupted, gentle, apologetic, persuasive.

The children waited, listened, unmoving. In a few minutes, mama came in, made a motion with her finger, and papa followed. He took his seat at the head of the table, stared at his plate, clucked his tongue, raised his

eyebrows and cleared his throat. The meal was continued in silence, as one by one the plates were set down for the next course.

Sometimes, however, papa's mood was different. He might come back, sit down, try to look at ease, begin to feel foolish instead, and meeting a watchful eye start to chuckle. Then everyone would heave a sigh and finish the meal in goodspirits. Beatrice might even request a story or chance a few cute remarks, as the baby of the family.

He was a strange man, papa, it was hard to make him out. Not at all like mama, who was easy and simple and always the same, with her nice face and warm body and pleasant voice, and able to do so many things like cook, sew, bake, knit, crochet, besides being good to everybody, loving her children, and being the best mama in the whole world. Beatrice never had any doubts about mama. Even if mama didn't know so much as papa and wasn't smart like him, she more than made it up with a smile and kiss and hug. Not that mama never lost her temper; she did. But as mama herself said so many times, she was only made of flesh and blood, only human. And in spite of everything, she was still mama and you never had any doubts about that. Papa, on the other hand, was only partly papa and mostly somebody else. And it wasn't because papa was a man. Mama said there wasn't another husband or father like him on the whole street, and she was crying angrily when she said that. It meant that he was different from other papas. It had something to do with the way he got all dressed up and then came home very late at night. Sometimes, he didn't come home until the next day or the day after that.

So you're dolling up again! I suppose they're having a bakers' ball this morning! And mama would sniff as he patted eau de cologne on his head and face. She resented that holiday look of his on an unexpected week-day morning:

the white silk shirt, bright tie, diamond stick pin and cufflinks, the flourishing handkerchief. She knew there would be a taxi waiting.

A boy's got to have some fun, Katie old girl, he would say, and give her a playful pinch on the cheek. Mama would turn away angrily and start her usual tirade. She spilled the coffee, forgot the sugar, threw the rolls on the table, talked and talked in helpless indignation, until papa left the house.

He was always having a date with the boys in a place called down-town. It meant that mama had to be alone those nights because she wouldn't leave the children to go anywhere else nor did she want company to visit when papa wasn't there.

Pretending she was thirsty, Beatrice would often find her sitting in the kitchen, dozing over a newspaper or doing some mending. She looked very lonely. Don't be sad, mama, she would say, not knowing what else to say, and she would give mama a special squeeze and another bunch of good night kisses.

And later, she would be awakened, knowing it was papa come home and it was hard to imagine that he was the same papa she had seen that morning all dressed up and so different. This papa was someone she didn't know at all, who laughed and cursed and talked to himself; when he tripped and fell in the hall, something went dark inside her and she couldn't understand it at all. But worst of all was the way mama carried on, weeping and screaming until she was hoarse. Then Beatrice shut her eyes and stopped her ears with her fingers and buried herself under the cover till Addie and Ben stopped giggling and whispering. And the next day, mama would look so tired and pale, that Beatrice felt sick with pain when mama got hysterical over some little thing gone wrong.

Mama, please mama, she cried, sitting on the floor, clutching mama's legs, don't cry, please don't cry! We'll be so good, we'll never fight again! We'll

make you happy, you'll see - and mama would rock her baby in her arms, wet cheek to cheek, breath to breath.

Sh, darling, sh. I can't help it. It hurts me in here. I have to cry to get rid of it. If my mother were only here, everything would be so much easier. God knows what will become of me, what will become of my poor children.

And if there was a special dessert that day, Beatrice wanted mama to have hers because she knew mama never bothered to make one for herself, dividing all there was among the children. But if there was any extras, Addie put in her bid for a second helping andBeatrice got hopping mad. You selfish old thing! she exclaimed, can't you see I want mama to have mine? Don't you think I like it just as much as you do? And she would snatch back her own portion while mama protested gently that she wasn't hungry, that she could have made more had she wanted any. Addie sneered victoriously with a look that meant see smarty and Ben scratched his head, puzzled, not knowing what it was all about except that all girls were crazy, daffy, and he circled his finger against his ear.

Mama warned them not to tell their private family affairs to anybody. What goes on here is nobody's business, you understand? And she was so insistent on the importance of keeping the scene of the night before a secret, saying that it would be a great sin if they even mentioned it to anyone - if they ask what the fight was all about, say you don't know anything about a fight, that you didn't hear anything - that Beatrice came to realize there was another reason. Mama was ashamed of what people might think. Beatrice kept quiet.

She knew everybody looked up to papa. He had an important think called pull. People from all over the neighborhood, even strangers, came to him for help when they had trouble. Papa was the only one who called the policeman Pat and one

time Beatrice saw papa give Pat some dollar bills. And Pat always tipped his hat and smiled when he saw papa; he would wave his stick and say, good morning, Mr. Berger, or good night, sir. It meant papa was an important man.

Once a week, Beatrice would sit at the dining room table after the dishes had been cleared and watch papa sort a bag full of money. First he would separate all the different kinds of bills, the ones, the twos, the fives, the tens, the twenties, a few fifties and hundreds, and then he would take each stack, face the bills the same way in front of him, and begin to count them with his fingers. He tied them into bundles with a wrapper around each, made a mark on topwith his fountain pen and laid them aside. Then he began sorting the silver: pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, half-dollar pieces, until they, too, were stacked and rolled into wrappers and marked. The papa she saw then was a different papa, one who worked quietly, seriously, with his glasses on. And as she listened to him count in quick undertones and watched him study the columns of figures that he added on long sheets of paper, she thought him the smartest and greatest man in the world.

People were forever coming to the house to see him about something. I would like to ask Mr. Berger's advice, they would tell mama and say it would be a big favor. And if papa wasn't home, she would tell them when to come back. She didn't mind. You see, she would say to Beatrice, even strange people know what a good business man he is! Fur coats, diamonds, furniture, insurance, government bonds - for everything they come to papa! And she smiled knowingly because even she liked to have papa along when she went out to buy anything good that cost a lot of money. But Beatrice could find out no more about his business than that he was the manager of a wholesale bakery concern. To Beatrice

that meant a store with crullers, sugared doughnuts, breads and fancy pastries, and yet she had never seen papa bake anything!

What hasn't he done! mama said when Beatrice asked what papa did. He was the manager of a big company. He had a stable with horses and wagons that went around to all the stores and made deliveries. Yes, bakery rolls and cakes.

Then why don't we get some, Beatrice asked.

What's the matter, don't you like my baking any more, mama answered and then she said she wouldn't eat that stuff for anything in the world. How do I know what they put in? When I bake, I use the best of everything, the best milk, butter, eggs, flour, cream, cheese, everything, then I'm sure.

It seemed very strange to Beatrice, about papa's work. Then one day she was walking in the street and the sidewalk opened and a man came up with a big tray full of cakes; he was wearing a white chimney hat and his hands were covered with flour. Mama said see, that's where they bake, in a big kitchen in the basement. Then Beatrice knew that papa wasn't a baker because she couldn't imagine him wearing such a funny hat and apron; papa was so short and had a round belly.

Addie said, silly, of course not, and she said that papa was a boss who had his own office and bookkeeper and that he was in charge of the whole business and paid wages to everyone who worked for him, and she said a lot of other things to prove that papa was a very important man, and thenBeatrice was satisfied because she knew papa was very smart and very, very rich.

Pay day at home was always lots of fun. It came once a week and it meant that papa gave them each some money. Beatrice came first because she was the baby of the family; she would run to him and say, all the pennies! And she

could pick out all the pennies that came up the first three times papa pulled his fist out of his pocket. She would make him shake his pocket so that he couldn't cheat. He always had a pocket full of change on pay day and it made a nice jingly noise when he shook it. His fist was full each time and Beatrice searched for her pennies very carefully to make sure none stayed hidden underneath. Ben cupped his hands to catch anything that fell, saying, finding's keepings, but papa just laughed because he gave Addie and Ben their turns later. If they chose nickels or dimes, they had to agree on how many, and then they were allowed to pick the newest and shiniest ones. Afterwards, mama came and held out her hand, saying, I'll take all you have in the other pocket, because that was where papa kept the dollar bills. And they always joked and quarrelled about how many bills she could have that week. Papa would take out a fat roll tied with a rubber band and start peeling them off one by one, but no matter how many he gave mama, she always asked for more.

He was very good about money, was papa; nobody could call him Mr. Stingy. Too good, mama would say. If he didn't drink and gamble half of it away, your father would be a great man.

If I wasn't alive, I'd be dead, he'd answer, and then add, besides, I don't smoke, don't forget that. And it made Beatrice very happy to see them together like that, joking and laughing and having a good time. Papa might even give mama a special hug and kiss and roll his eyes and wink and then the children blushed and looked embarrassed because it happened so seldom and seemed so strange to see papa and mama kissing.

He was very good about presents, too, especially after one of his downtown dates. It might be a package full of special things to eat, like halvah or Turkish candy, or a tin of Chinese tea with little flowers among

the leaves, and imported cans of caviar, pimentos, herring, sardines, or bottles of olives and pickles and different kinds of cheese. Sometimes it was a basket of imported fruits: blood oranges, figs, dates, prickly pears, pomegranates - many of them stuffed with nuts and rolled in powdered sugar. Or it might be silk stockings and pocketbooks and lacy underwear and a few dresses for mama and Addie. The children would gather around the table excitedly, begging mama to come and open the packages right away. But mama wasn't in a hurry to forgive papa; the last time he had gone off on a holiday spree, he had stayed away two nights and she hadn't spoken to him for almost a week.

Pocketbooks, she would say sarcastically, what do I need so many pocketbooks for? I just got a new one the other day. And these! She held up a nightgown. What do you think I am, a bride? My God, if I were to start wearing fancy panties and lace brassieres and chemises! The children kept exclaiming as she went through the merchandise while papa just stood there quietly, not at all fooled by mama, because he knew she was a woman at heart and that all women liked the frilly stuff.

Must have had a good night for a change, mama said to no one in particular. When he wins, it's presents. When he loses, it's a nice fat check to so and so. I know. And either way, it's a big blowout afterwards with wine, women and song. Sure. While I have to stay home alone and mind the children. A swell arrangement, I don't think. And by then, she was mad without being upset and papa knew the worst was over for the time being.

Do I want you to stay home, he would josh her. How many times have you refused to have a servant to help you? And if I ask you out, you say why

spend the money or you start kicking about taxis and shows and restaurants - G'wan, you're an old fashioned girl, Katie. And mama couldn't say anything more to him because it was always the same and they could never agree and she would have gone on with a weekly brawl and daily heartache for ever, if papa hadn't brought the scandal of it right to her doorstep.

It was the time Jenny moved in. Beatrice thought she was a homely looking woman and very plain. People said she must be nearly twenty-eight, an old-maid, a greenhorn, probably an orphan. Jenny took the small apartment on the second floor rear. She left the house early in the morning and returned at night, carrying some bags of groceries. Beatrice often saw her and wondered why she didn't speak to anybody. She didn't seem to have any friends. She simply came and went, always in the same dark clothes, carrying a shabby hand-bag under her arm. It went on like that for a long time, till people began to talk.

At first, mama wouldn't believe it. Papa and that dumb-bell upstairs? Ridiculous! But Beatrice heard her asking papa questions. What's she doing here living alone, an unmarried girl with an apartment all to herself? Jenny - did you ever, I don't even know her last name! A girl without parents or family relations or friends, who works and eats and keeps all to herself. And such an ugly girl, who can't even open her mouth decently to say good-morning to anyone. Foo! I don't think there's a person in the whole neighborhood who likes her. She reminds me of a witch. Papa said something about women and talk and talk and let it go at that.

And then Jenny stopped going to work in the mornings. But her rent was paid in full at the first of the month. By whom? Mrs. Sampson, the landlady, drew her thin lips tight: it wasn't her business, she only collected the rent.

Then Jenny began to appear in new clothes. The old black bag disappeared and in its place Jenny now carried a nice new shiny one. Beatrice overheard a few remarks and frowned. Mama's face looked more strained than usual.

Papa went out for walks more often and his walks took longer. Or he would join mama for a cup of tea in Mrs. Singer's apartment on the third floor, then after some talk, yawn and say he was going to bed, but that mama could stay if she liked. His visits downtown came to an earlier finish; he came home smiling, without being drunk, and said he'd like some supper. Beatrice began to get used to seeing him every night, sitting in the dining-room, helping Addie and Ben with their school lessons.

Mama wanted to believe he was getting sensible at last, that he was beginning to think less of himself and more of her and the children; she wanted to believe that very much. But there was the talk and she kept her eyes on the lookout. And one day when he had excused himself early from a tea visit on the third floor, she found a reason to follow him shortly after and as she passed by Jenny's door on the second floor she paused to see if she had caught the hem of her skirt on her heel. She hadn't, but Beatrice saw a look on mama's face she didn't like. Was that papa's voice and laugh she heard? She didn't dare ask. Nor did mama stop to find out that day.

But it wasn't long after that mama caught him coming out of Jenny's door. It was the worst scene Beatrice had ever witnessed. But this time it was a new mama she saw. Papa didn't have a chance. She wouldn't even listen. He got mad, swore he was innocent, said he had met Jenny by accident on the stairs just as she tripped and sprained her ankle, that he had only helped her into the house and called the doctor, that mama could go and see for herself -

If that woman isn't gone by tomorrow, I'll break down her door and make her wish she had never been born! Hair, eyes, clothes, nock, I tell you, Max, there won't be anything left of her! If that's what you want, a public scandal, you'll get it! Let the whole world hear about it! We'll see who gets the best of this, this time, you or me! And it was mama with all her wounds, fighting, fighting like made to get revenge. And papa know she meant every word she said. He walked away, pale, angry, ashamed, knowing he had lost.

Jonny moved away, not that next day, but very soon after. She left during the night, secretly, and mama knew papa had arranged it that way.

For a few days, Beatrice sensed mama's newness and kept out of the kitchen. She was a little afraid of mama. Mama's newness reminded her of papa, of Mrs. Singer, the way she walked, her voice sharp, the serious look on her face. Beatrice left her alone. She played with Birdie most of the time. There were no stories, no dressmaking for the dolls, no happy games in the stores. When mama stopped to talk with the neighbors, she sent Beatrice off somewhere. It was strange seeing mama like that. She couldn't get used to it. It was like mama being sick. She waited, wishing mama would get well soon.

She didn't have to wait long. Mama was still mama, after all, still Katie old girl. For if papa was more careful about his dates downtown with the boys for a while, it was only for a little while, and mama knew that, much as she tried to keep her new role firm and convincing.

You can't teach an old dog new tricks, he told her gaily, as soon as he thought it was safe to deck himself out in his holiday finery once more, and when mama drew herself up to upbraid him, something in his smile and look cut her short and she realized she was no match for him, standing

barefoot and in her nightgown before a papa already combed and groomed and colognedand set to go.

It's a wonder you don't realize how old a dog you are, she said, you, a man of forty, with three children and one almost a young lady! Getting dressed like a dandy and carrying on like a wild young buck without any responsibilities!

A man has to have his fun, he chuckled and gave her an extra ten spot to go out and buy herself something and be a good girl.

Then there was a big event in the neighborhood and everybody forgot about Jenny. Even the children took to betting. Some said a girl, some said a boy. The women gossiped about nothing else. When it's that big in front and nothing showing in the back, all right, you'll see. Beatrice tried to find out what it was all about, but even Ben chased her away. Now Bee, we're talking secrets, just for boys, you can't stay. And then one day everybody crowded in front of the brownstone house across the street, talking in excited whispers and waiting, and Beatrice knew it had something to do with Mrs. Reynolds, the new lady who had moved into that house about a month ago and whom she had seen many times and thought very nice. The people who lived in the row of private, two-storied houses across the street were considered rich and Beatrice often wondered why papa and mama didn't live on that side. They were nice to look at, with their high stoops, tall windows, pointed roofs and basement areas; some had gardens both front and back and it was nice to see trees sticking up behind the houses. It was like having a private park right at your back-door.

She walked across the street and stood on tiptoe, trying to see over people's heads into the window on the first floor. Suddenly a short, crippled

old man appeared and someone said, the doctor, and the crowd made way for him on the sidewalk and the stairs, and someone called,good luck, doctor, and spoke to him as he passed and then laughed, and after he went inside everybody became quiet again and kept looking and waiting until the door opened and someone came out. Twins. The word spread quickly, loudly; the children jumped up and down; a woman screamed with laughter; friends kissed and hugged each other. The crowd moved away from the house, looking relieved and happy.

Twins. That meant two children. A boy and a girl,mama said. Beatrice could hardly wait to see them. She had never seen twins before. A brother her own age, who looked just like her; why didn't you have twins, she asked.

I did, mama said, before Addie. They died right after they were born. Beatrice gazed, her mouth wide open with astonishment.

Twins, mama, she repeated, unable to grasp this new thought, they died?

Two boys, mama said sadly, such sweet little babies, they came too soon.

What do you mean? Beatrice asked, frowning.

You wouldn't understand, mama said and turned away.

Twins, mama, two boys, two brothers, before Addie - She ran after mama to ask how old they would be now.

Let's see; mama began figuring years, months, anniversaries. Beatrice waited impatiently.

Fourteen, why mama! And she felt cheated, suddenly, as though she had just been robbed of two big brothers. And she looked so hurt, so confused and surprised and indignant - how she would have loved them, how they would have played with her - that mama had to laugh.

You wouldn't be here if they had lived, she said, and maybe Ben neither. Again, Beatrice looked dumbfounded.

What do you mean? she stammered.

I mean, began mama with an exasperated sigh, then laughed heartily, seeing Beatrice's face. Never mind, wait till you're a mother. Believe me, three's enough! And she gave Beatrice a playful slap behind and sent her on an errand.

But when Beatrice saw Mrs. Reynolds wheeling a double carriage a few weeks later, she knew at last what all the secret mystery was about. She ran up the stairs and into the house, brimming with discovery. Mama was talking to Addie in the dining-room. Mama, I know where the twins came from, she sang. Mama and Addie looked at her in amazement. From Mrs. Reynold's belly, she yelled and clapped her hands. Mama bit her lip, trying not to smile, feeling Addie's eyes searching her face.

Is that so, she said, and what makes you think so? Beatrice tossed her head, proud of being so smart.

Because before she was fat and now she's skinny, that's why! Mama began to laugh and Addie and Beatrice joined her. After a moment, mama stopped to wipe the tears from her eyes.

You foolish child, that's because she's wearing a new corset! And mama started to laugh louder and harder than ever.

Of course Beatrice wouldn't believe it, especially when Addie made believe she was grown-up, too, and said, you foolish child, don't you know the stork brings babies?

Sure, said mama, you saw the doctor carrying his satchel! But they

couldn't fool her! Now she knew it wasn't true about Dr. Rausch and she was very happy that she had come from inside mama because that made her mama's for real, and that's all she cared about.

They were cute babies with cute names, Paul and Polly, and Beatrice liked to walk next to Mrs. Reynolds, holding one of the carriage handles. She watched them breathe anxiously, and when they fell asleep, she grew worried. Are Paul and Polly all right? she asked and Mrs. Reynolds would smile and assure her they were.

She told mama it was wonderful how much Beatrice loved the twins, and when she got ready to take them to the country for the summer, she asked if Beatrice could come along with them.

Would you like to go? mama asked, but Beatrice knew she could never leave mama, even to be with the twins.

Why can't we all go? suggested Mrs. Reynolds, then it would be perfect. It would be so good for you as well as the children, you could use a rest, and as for the expense, it wouldn't be more than staying at home in the hot city. Please think it over and talk to Mr. Berger, won't you? Beatrice is so good with the twins; they'll miss her, and I'll miss her, too.

And when papa came home, Beatrice repeated everything Mrs. Reynolds had said and more. Papa, you have no idea how beautiful it is! They have a barn and cows and chickens and trees and everything! And it's so cheap and good for us. Mama needs a rest. And look how skinny Addie is. And I still have a lot to grow. And the twins are so cute. Mrs. Reynolds asked me to come but I said no, didn't I, mama? So we can all go, can't we, papa?

A lawyer, by God, he said and pinched her cheek. And she was so happy that his answer meant yes, that she hugged his neck tight and kissed his cheek all over, then danced all around the room, singing I knew, I knew it, we're all going to the country!

And they did, mama having decided she had been Katie old girl long enough. If I don't spend it, he will, she said, half-arguing to herself. He gambles and drinks when I'm home, anyway, so why should I worry when I'm away? This way, at least, the children can get some good out of it.

But she wasn't able to leave with Mrs. Reynolds because Ben and Addie still had another week of school and there were many things to buy and do to get the house in order and - Beatrice grew restless, counting the days. She became such a pest that mama asked if papa could take her to the office for a day.

I've got to finish this shopping and get the trunk packed or it'll never go off, she said irritably.

What'll I do with her? papa demanded at the door.

She can see the stables; you can get someone to take her around!

It made Beatrice feel very important to be walking to business with papa. She took long steps to keep up with him, forcing her feet to count two to every pavement square. Stepping on a line was bad luck and she crossed her fingers every time she did because she was walking too fast to be careful. It was early in the morning and there was still the smell of last night's rain in the air. The streets wore an after-bath brightness and cleanness and she felt happy to bewalking with papa. They didn't talk, they just moved along at a quick stride and before she knew it they were there.

The office was on a street full of trees and wooden houses. There were horses and wagons lined up against the sidewalk in front of the stable and there was a nice fresh smell coming from it. Twice, papa stopped to pat a horse and Beatrice saw him take some lumps of sugar from his pocket and put them, palm-up, to the horse's mouth. It gave her a funny feeling to see papa pat the horses and put his hand up to their mouths. She wished she could do that but she felt afraid to, they were so big, through their eyes were gentle and she liked the way their tails swished from side to side. Then papa took her inside the stable and there were many more horses and wagons and she saw a man in overalls washing the floor with a long brush that he dipped into a pail of water. Papa called him Mike and Mike shook her hand very nicely. He had a jolly round face with pink cheeks and blue eyes and he laughed a lot. When she left she said goodbye, Mike, and he laughed some more and said come back and see me again, I'm always here, that right, Mr. Berger? And papa waved his hand and said, right on the job all the time, and then they went up a flight of wooden steps alongside the stable and came into papa's office. There were a few rooms there and papa unlocked one of them that had a little window cage you could look through. He let Beatrice sit on a high stool in front of a slanting table so that she could see out the cage. Then he took off his jacket, rolled up his sleeves and sat down at a big desk. After a while, he gave her some paper and a nice new yellow pencil which he sharpened with his pocketknife to a neat smooth point and told her she could do whatever she liked because he had a lot of work to do, and then he opened a big book and began humming over a page. She tried to start with a picture of the horse and wagon on the street but it didn't come out right, so she erased the

lines, then put the paper underneath the others when papa wasn't looking because it was creased and funny, and then she started over on a nice clean sheet to write all the words and numbers she knew. Papa came over to see what she was doing and said she was doing fine, but that she could do better if she stayed on the lines, and he showed her how. By then, Miss Scott, the bookkeeper, came in, and after shakinghands and saying good-morning, papa showed her the paper Beatrice had written on. Miss Scott seemed surprised and said, she must be a very smart little girl, and asked if she was going to be a bookkeeper, too, when she grew up. Beatrice blushed and said she didn't know. Then Miss Scott hung her hat near a small mirror at the window, put a smock over her dress and rolled some paper around her wrists with rubber bands. She smiled at Beatrice as she walked to a smaller desk near papa's and sat down. The desk rolled back and there was a typewriter on it. Beatrice watched Miss Scott's fingers jump up and down as the typewriter ticked from side to side. Then she started on the next sheet to make her words and numbers sit on the lines the way papa had showed her.

Later, papa asked Miss Scott to bring Beatrice a glass of milk and it was fun drinking out of a straw in papa's office. A few drivers came in to ask papa about delivery orders and they all looked at her curiously. Miss Scott said she was Mr. Berger's little girl and some of them said oh. Beatrice wondered why Miss Scott's voice changed when she talked into the telephone; sometimes she held her hand over it and talked to papa, then changed her voice when she took her hand away. Her voice was different when she spoke to the drivers, too. Beatrice kept staring at her and when Miss Scott looked back and smiled, Beatrice made believe she was looking at the wall, feeling embarrassed.

And when papa took her in to meet Mr. Schumann, she noticed that his voice was different, too, and she knew papa wanted her to make a good impression because Mr. Schumann was the boss. So she put on her very best smile, made a curtsy the way Addie had taught her to do and said, how do you do, Mr. Schumann, I'm very glad to meet you. Mr. Schumann's face wrinkled all around his eyes, his eyebrows went up and he nodded to papa a few times, so she knew it was all right. Then he said he was sorry he hadn't known she was coming or he would have something nice to give her. Then he reminded himself and said oh yes, and he took a nickel out of his pocket, but Beatrice said no, thank you, I'm not allowed to take money from strangers. And papa chuckled and got red in the face and Mr. Schumann leaned back in his chair and laughed and said, that's right, I'm sorry, please excuse me, and he put the nickel back in his pocket and gave her a nice squeeze. And afterwards, papa said she had done the right thing and gave her two nickels, instead, and he looked very pleased and she was glad.

It was Mike who took her over to the bakery building. It was on the same street, a few doors away. Papa said he had some work to do and couldn't go with her and told Mike to take care of her lunch. It was a big place, full of nice smells, and everybody was very nice to her. Mike said she was a friend of his, one of M. B.'s kids, and she liked the way they wiped the flour off their hands and gave her a friendly handshake. They took her around and showed her where the bread was made and how the cakes came out of the oven shelves. There were long tables full of flour and dough and boxes stacked with tins. One of the bakers brought her a roll spread with butter, a jam cookie and a big glass of milk. Mike lifted her up on a table and asked how she liked her lunch. It was a very nice lunch and she liked being there.

Then she grew hot and said she would like to go now and it was nice coming out into the street again and feeling the fresh air against her warm cheeks.

Papa took her home early and the first thing she did was to go to the bathroom, glad to see the white seat again. Mama said he should have taken her to the toilet in the office but papa said he'd forgotten because a man couldn't think about such things. Then he made Beatrice lie down to rest and he did the same thing. That day was something to think about and it lasted her till the time came to go to the country.

Then everything happened so fast that she didn't have time to think about anything. Addie and Ben talked about their tests and promotions and report cards and presents for their teachers. Mama was busy packing, camphoring drawers and closets, covering the furniture, trying to get the trunk off. I wish I'd never started this business, she said. The country! What's the matter with the city? Haven't we managed to stay home every summer until now? By the time I get to the country, I'll need a vacation! Then papa began to complain. Whose idea was it in the first place? Did she think it was going to be any picnic for him, eating his meals out, being alone in the house, and all that?

But finally the day came and they all got into a taxi and drove to the railway station. Beatrice was quiet all the way. It was all so new and strange that she didn't know whether she liked it or not. She began to miss the house and the street right away. She wouldn't have any Birdie or Elsie or Edna to play with any more. Her bed would be all alone. The kitchen would be empty, the stove, the icebox. Then, too, trains meant being sick and getting tired, and how far was it to the country anyway?

It was a different kind of train, she saw that at once. It was bigger

and the seats were nice and soft, red, and you sat sideways to the window. They sat in the train at the station a long time and a man came by to see their tickets. Mama looked worried and her face was all pink and wet. Papa was dressed in a white shirt and knickers and socks and sport shoes; he didn't seem to mind the heat or anything. When the conductor passed, papa told mama to relax now, but she said, you can talk, and she couldn't stop wondering if she had forgotten anything at home and she fussed over the lunch bag and the children's coats and looked in her pocketbook to see if everything was there and when the conductor passed again she asked if it was the right train to the right station.

Then the train started and there were many tracks and it was daylight once more and it was fun seeing everything run sideways and backwards. Until the tunnel came and there was a terrible smell, much worse than the subway, and the cars banged shut and it was dark outside the window and the train roared. Then she and Ben changed seats with papa because mama said it would be better for them to ride forwards and Ben put his arm around her, and she fell asleep leaning against him. When she awoke it was time to eat and the train was still going very fast, only now there were fields of grass and trees and hills outside the window and she knew they were coming into the country. She could hardly wait to see the twins and mama talked about the cows and chickens and fresh fruits and vegetables. Then Addie said there must be a swing in the orchard or at least a hammock and Ben said he didn't care so long as there was a place to play ball and a place to swim. And they got all excited again and mama smiled and said there was no place like the country for children and how glad she was to have a rest. Then they asked what about papa, must he go back, and papa said, who's going to pay for this if I don't work, and mama

said he didn't call what he did work, and besides, he was coming up every weekend. So they were all talking and laughing and enjoying the scenery when their station came and it looked as though they were going to have a wonderful time for a change.

They had to take two rooms in the annex because the main house was full. Papa was annoyed about that. The rooms in the annex seemed small and drab to him but mama said, what's the difference, we're only going to sleep in them. So they had the suitcases sent up and the only thing that worried mama was what to do with the trunk when it came because there was hardly room to turn around and the trunk simply wouldn't fit anywhere. Beatrice was disgusted. The wall paper was cracked and faded, the floor was bare, the ceiling was stained and creepy looking and she didn't like having a sink in the same room with the beds. The main house was much better than this dump. The dining-room was there and the playroom and the parlor and there was a great big porch around it and the grounds were full of trees and grass and flowers. Dump, she repeated after papa, just small rooms full of strange people and not even a private toilet and bath. Papa was right: why go away if you can't get something as good as home at least?

But the twins were there and eating in the dining-room was fun and it was nice having a waiter bring in anything you wanted. She liked being with the grown-ups; she was hungry that first meal and ate everything. Then mama said she could begin eating in the children's dining room tomorrow and Addie snickered behind her napkin. That made Beatrice mad; she wasn't going to eat with a lot of babies! She was just as good as Addie any time! There was

some trouble about going to bed, too. Why couldn't she stay up if Addie could? Because I'm six years older than you, that's why! That's no reason, it's not fair! Scat-scat-scat said Addie, clawing the air, you're just a jealous cat. Then they had a fight and papa said, all right, that's enough, all of you, and he sent the three of them to bed. Mama had a hard time, with Addie crying and saying it was all that little insect's fault, then mama whispered something in her ear and Addie stopped crying and said, promise? And mama winked and shook her head. Afterwards, Beatrice got in Ben's bed because Addie kept calling her names and being mean, and then they saw things flying and creeping all over the room and Ben said, what are you scared of? Huh, girls! And he jumped up on the beds and went leaping about with a towel, whacking at the bugs, while Addie hid under the sheet and screamed. Beatrice thought Ben was wonderful, so brave!

The next day was beautiful and Beatrice had a good time playing with the twins. She made lots of friends in the children's dining-room and they went romping in the orchard. It was full of apple trees. You could see little green balls through the leaves. There were some big ones on the ground but the seeds were still white and they tasted bitter. Later, a bell rang and everybody ran to the main porch to get some milk. It was in a big can and the woman poured it into glasses saying it was fresh from the cow and still warm. Beatrice had three glasses full; it was sweet and very good. Then the children took turns swinging in the hammock and using the seesaw. Of course the big children got there first, but Mary had a teddy bear and Beatrice had her toy dishes, so the two of them played house most of the morning. Addie showed up with a daisy chain around her head and neck. She and Dotty and Mildred had

been in the field. She wanted to give mama a chain but mama said why not give it to Beatrice, but Beatrice didn't want it because Dotty was going to show her how to make one herself.

When lunch time came, Beatrice wasn't feeling well; she didn't want anything to eat. Addie said, she's only saying that because she wants to sit with us in the big dining-room, but it wasn't true because Beatrice really looked sick and even though mama let her sit with the grown-ups and it was a special dinner with lots of extra courses and good things to eat, Beatrice just sat there feeling sick all over. Mama said it was the apples or too much milk. Papa said it was the change from the city. Addie said castor oil would be good. Then Mrs. Reynolds and some other ladies came over to the table and they looked at Beatrice and began advising what to do. And right after lunch, mama took her into Mrs. Rose's room which was next to the dining-room facing the porch and Beatrice began crying because she didn't want mama to undress her in front of everybody with the window wide open. And the women had to hold her while mama gave her an enema and she was never so miserable in all her life. She heard the children laughing behind the drawn curtains and she was sure they were laughing at her. The women kept hushing and talking to her, saying she was too big to cry and that they were only trying to help her for her own good and that it didn't really hurt, and look, the bag is almost empty. She hated them, hated their make-believe voices while she was hurting so badly. Only mama who loved her knew how she felt, and she fell asleep, sobbing against mama's soft, kind breast.

Papa kissed them goodbye early in the morning while they were still in bed and told them to be good children. He wanted to hear nice things about

them when he came back next week. It seemed strange to have him say goodbye; at home he never came to their bedroom to kiss them goodbye in the morning. Then Beatrice remembered it was for a whole week and went back to sleep again.

Beatrice liked the country. The ground was soft, all covered with grass and earth. It was much nicer than a street. Here, you could see the sky wherever you looked. It was a bigger sky than the sky in the city and it had a much prettier shape, cut out of curved hills and tall trees on one side and evenly trimmed on the other side by straight wide fields. And you could make all kinds of pictures out of the clouds, animals and houses and people, and the air was full of different colors. In the morning the air was gray and yellow, from very dark to very light. The grass was full of tiny bubbles and when you touched them your fingers got wet and the bubbles disappeared. Addie said it was dew, but she couldn't explain it. Mama said they were fairy beads and not to walk on them till the fairies had collected them or the beads would be broken. You couldn't see the fairies unless you had very good eyes, but sometimes, when Beatrice closed her eyes half-way, she could see them moving around behind the flowers. She wondered what it was like to be a fairy and live in the country all the time. Afternoons were white, almost silver. Leaves, rocks, water, houses, people's arms and faces - everything had a white shine. Unless it rained and then everything changed to green, from pale like apple to almost black like rock. But best of all was when the day went to sleep and before night came. It began slowly with a soft blue haze that deepened and changed to pink, then became orange, then brown, then a light purple mixed with all the other colors, and the air fell like a thin curtain waving before your eyes. It had running lines and tiny dots that

your eyes couldn't follow because they fell so fast. But it was day going to sleep under veils and veils of color, and then it was cool and nothing was left but the shadows of the wind dancing into the night. Dusk. She loved the whispering softness of it. Dusk, like dust. Sshh. And the whole sky falling through the air. And all the animals and people in the sky following the sun, going behind the curved hills to sleep: the sheep, the giant snake, the old man with the long beard, the big bear, the shapes without names because she could not give them any. Her sky world disappeared and the stars came out, like lights in houses far away when you couldn't see the windows.

Then it was hard to go indoors, to sit on a chair at a table in a room closed by walls with a roof and a floor, to hear ordinary voices of people talking and see them moving around just as always, to go to sleep in a small bed - and all the world outside. But you could close your eyes and fly out the window and be whatever you wanted, wherever. It was lovely the way it happened. She hugged her secret close. One minute you were there, getting washed and undressed; you saw mama and Addie, heard Ben's goodnight. Then you waited till Addie stopped moving around and pulling the blanket. The door is closed, mama has gone, the sounds are those of people moving and talking inside the house. And then. Outside there's a mysterious silence. The strange world of night has come. There will be gay songs and dances, fairies dressed in colors. Fire will be there like tips of gas light and the faces of the stars and the laughter of flowers. Fish will come out of the sea. Birds will fly down from the trees. From all over the world, beautiful people and animals will come. And now Beatrice is getting ready to leave, too. And now. Goodbye, Addie, goodbye, room.

And one minute she was there. And then she wasn't. And just when it happened, she couldn't remember the next morning. It was a secret. She tried to find out what the secret was. She would make believe she was sleeping, then peek. Beatrice, watching herself, one eye open, one closed, wanting to be there when she went away and there when she came back, not knowing how it happened, remembering only that she had been there waiting, thinking, now I'm asleep, now I'm going away, and then falling asleep without knowing when or how.

It became a game. In the morning, when she woke, she tried to go back, to be there. What had happened? Where had she been? Now I'm sleeping, now I'm coming back. And she didn't want it to be morning yet, with Addie pushing her and Ben whistling and mama coming in to help them dress. And sometimes she would lie there with her eyes shut tight, not wanting to hear or see or be awake in any way, trying to go back, concentrating, last night, just before. And something in her dream that she would remember suddenly made her wonder if that had really happened or not. The monkey, of course! And she would spring out of bed to see if he was still there. It was disappointing to find him gone. She hoped he would come back. And mama, seeing her smile, would ask what she was thinking about, but she would shake her head and laugh. It was a secret. And she couldn't help thinking that papa might bring her the monkey the next time he came up from the city, and she thought how they would walk and play ball and eat peanuts together just as they had in her dream.

It was funny how different everybody was except Paul and Polly who were the same because they were twins. Mrs. Rose had orange colored hair and though she was fat she wasn't fat like Mrs. Weaver who had black hair tied in

a knot on top of her head. And it wasn't because their names were different. There was Mary the maid and Mary Josephson with whom she played and they weren't the same Mary. No, it was because they were made different that they were different. Tall, short, fat, skinny, straight nose, crooked nose, small eyes, big eyes, curly hair, brown hair, ways of walking, ways of talking - she began to notice the differences. Then one day, two men came into the dining-room to play and the one at the piano was blind. He sang and played at the same time and everyone said how marvelous it was. Beatrice wondered how he could find the right piano notes if he couldn't see and she went over to watch him. He smiled at her and his eyes were open blind and then she saw the man who was playing the violin looking at her and she felt ashamed and went back to her table, and afterwards when the two men left, she saw the blind man holding the other man's arm. Then she knew there were even more differences between people and she thought it was terrible to be blind. Mama said, believe me, we don't know when we're well off, if I gave him all my money, I'd still be rich. And she told the children never to laugh at such poor people because you never could tell, and it was better to be good to them. Beatrice felt very sad about the blind man and she couldn't understand how the people were able to enjoy his songs, even though he had made them sound lively and funny. She thought it very strange.

Then papa came back for the next week-end and they were all glad to see him though he was hot and sticky and could hardly bear to kiss them because it had been such an uncomfortable train ride and the city had been awful. The first thing I want is a swim, he said, so he changed into his bathing suit and they went down to the stream to watch him. He didn't swim; he just stood in the water and splashed it over his arms and face and chest, then dipped

down to his shoulders a few times and turned over on his back tofloat. It was funny to see his belly ride on top; it looked like a big rubber ball.

Papa's being there gave them something to talk about; they didn't run around so much or make so much noise. Mama got them all dressed up for him because she wanted them to look their best. Don't you think they've gained? she said. She sat very tall at the table, looking proud. All the ladies came over to say hello and to ask how the weather was in the city because their husbands couldn't come up till the next day. They thought it was wonderful that papa could get away on Friday and told him he was lucky, though he pretended it was nothing at all.

It was a quiet week-end except for Saturday night when there was some entertainment for the grown-ups. None of the children were allowed to stay up and Addie complained that she was missing everything. Miss what, mama exclaimed, you know we don't dance! Papa will look for a game of pinnochle and I'll probably sit with the women and tell some stupid jokes. I'd rather go to bed, myself. And the next day mama complained about the way papa was handing drinks out to everybody.

As though it was water. At every meal, he has to show off. Such a sport. Cognac, Hennessey, wine, what not. Why must you bring it to the table, just to be popular?

All right, I have it and they don't, he answered and beckoned to someone with his bottle. But mama didn't show anybody how she felt; she nodded and smiled and at every toast said, here's health, or, drink heartily. That was to be sociable, Beatrice decided. Everybody liked papa because he was so sociable.

Then her birthday came and mama made a party for the children and Beatrice

was happy to be five years old. Mama got her all dressed in white: a white silk dress with puffed sleeves and a tucked blouse, white silk socks and her new white kid shoes that buttoned all the way up to the ankle, and a fresh white taffeta hair ribbon to clip on her head. She sang songs and recited for the children and they all clapped and enjoyed themselves. There was lemonade and ice cream and everyone got a piece of her chocolate birthday cake. Afterwards they played the victrola and Beatrice picked out the records on the floor and handed them up to a tall boy one by one. She was having such a good time that she tried to keep it in because she was afraid that if she left the room the party would be over and she would have to go to bed. So she sat on the heel of her shoe very hard and soon it was too late. Then she walked away, she noticed that her shoe was all green. Then someone saw the wet circle on the carpet and the children began to laugh and run around to see who it was and when they saw Beatrice's shoe they yelled and teased her but she insisted it was the lemonade and that she had spilled it right there in front of the victrola, herself. But mama found out differently because her drawers were still wet and Beatrice begged her not to tell anybody because she was so ashamed and right at her own party, and she looked so worried and spoke in such a low serious voice that mama promised to keep it a secret just between the two of them. So when they came back to the bedroom, nothing was said to Addie or Ben about it, and Beatrice went to bed thinking it was the best birthday she had ever had.

The grass grew tall and soon the children were playing hide-and-seek in the fields. It was fun to go into the grass and get lost. Beatrice liked to hide there; she could crouch way down and see the top of the grass overhead

and no one could ever find her. She could hear them running past her and she had to put her hands over her mouth so that they wouldn't hear her laughing. It was like being a bird or a grasshopper or maybe a fairy. Then the one who was it would call, come out, come out, wherever you are, and she would jump up with her arms over her head and shout, here I am, I'm last! But one day she went very far out in the field and even after they called Ready, they couldn't see her because the grass was so high and suddenly she saw something very big, then two of them, and there was a funny noise very close to her ears and the grass moved in front of her and she was so scared that she couldn't run away and then she fell down or was knocked down and something went over her and afterwards she just lay there, trying to cry. And when the children found her, they said it was only a cow, but by then she was really crying and she could hardly wait to get out of the field and she wouldn't go back to play there any more.

After that she kept looking under everything to see if anything was there and she counted the legs under the table to see whose they were and she made mama take the valises out from under the bed and open them to make sure. Insects hiding in daisies bothered her a lot, too. She always looked for them before she would pick the petals off to find out if it was yes or no, loves me, loves me not. She took a long time to get all her petals off; she had to examine each one to see if it was all right to touch. Insects made her shiver; she blew at them, shook them offf, and if there were too many she threw the flower away in disgust.

It was a fine summer; she liked the country and when the time came to go home she didn't want to leave. But mama said it was getting too cold at nights and there was rain almost every day, and papa said he was tired of eating out

and riding back and forth every week, and Addie said, what's the use of staying if everybody's going home, and Ben said none of the kids knew how to play and that it took a city team to beat the band. Beatrice thought about Birdie and Elsie and Edna and how different it was to play in the house or the street, on the stairs or the stoop or in the backyard and she said she wanted to stay, anyway. But of course she couldn't, all alone, and she couldn't leave mama, so she had to say goodbye to all the things she loved; the sky, the orchard, the hammock, the porch, the barn, the stream, the playroom, the trees, and she walked all around and touched everything, even the earth on the ground, to say goodbye, and she was very unhappy when the horse and wagon came to take them all to the station to go home.

Then school started and she was taken to kindergarten for real and she was allowed to sit next to Madeline and she forgot all about the country. Everyone wanted to sit next to Madeline but Miss Muffett and Miss Wilson said only the two best, and Beatrice tried hard so that they would pick her. Madeline was a big girl with a big head and she sat in a big chair with wheels. She had a nice face, soft and pale, and she had long curly eyelashes and light brown eyes. Everybody liked to touch Madeline, to stroke her short brown hair that was cut like a boy's, or pat her hand, or put their fingers on her face. She didn't mind; she always smiled at them and her eyes looked very quiet. Madeline didn't move around like the other children; she just sat in her big chair and looked at them. Her mother brought her to school in the chair and then wheeled her away when the first bell rang. Beatrice liked to sit next to Madeline. She liked to show her how to make paper hats and chains and little baskets. Every day she made something for mama and something for Madeline.

When they had a party, all the children's chairs were hung across the room and they wore their own paper hats and ate out of their own paper baskets on a little paper tablecloth with a napkin to match. It was a nice big room with a piano and little tables and chairs and on the window sills there were plants and books and pretty toys for the children to play with as a reward. They played games and danced while Miss Wilson sang at the piano and Miss Muffet clapped her hands.

Beatrice liked kindergarten. She came to school with Addie and Ben in the morning and then mama met them in the yard for lunch. Sometimes they went home to lunch but mama said it was too much for them to walk back and forth twice a day, so papa bought them a big thermos bottle and mama fixed their lunch and told Addie to divide everything and to see that they ate slowly and carefully. They had sandwiches and fruit and cake and a glass of milk each and Addie had to tell if they ate everything or not. Then Beatrice could stay in school for the afternoon and come back with Addie and Ben. There was another kindergarten class in the afternoon but Beatrice didn't like it as much as the one in the morning because Madeline wasn't there. So Miss Muffett let her go on messages for the office or help fix the closets and desk drawers and Beatrice kept very busy till three o'clock.

She liked to do homework, too. It made her feel very grown-up to sit with Addie and Ben at the dining-room table and do homework. She had her own book and pencil and they gave her numbers to write and words to spell all by herself. She liked to look at their school books; there were nice pictures in them, but the words were hard and printed in very small letters. The children in kindergarten didn't have any books but the teachers read them stories every day. Beatrice knew some of them and she loved to hear them read. They were stories from the Bible and fairy tales and Mother Goose rhymes and she knew many of them by heart. It was fun to listen and know what was coming at the same time.

Beatrice told mama about Madeline and mama shook her head and sighed. Poor child, to have to go through life like that, she said, and so young. I'm glad you're good to her, darling, she needs goodness. And it made Beatrice feel very sorry about Madeline because it meant that something was wrong. Was she sick? But mama said she was bornlike that, not like other children. Beatrice wanted to know why. God knows, mama said, it just happens like that sometimes, and then she added, how that poor mother must have suffered!

After that, Beatrice thought a lot about God. God could make anything happen. He could move mountains, drown the whole world, dry a road across a river, save lives, make sick people well, help good people out of their troubles, anything. If you want something from God, what should you do, she asked.

Pray to Him, mama said, just close your eyes and talk to Him, but you have to be a very good girl or He won't listen. Beatrice thought about that a while. And that's all?

Yes, mama smiled, that's all. But what do you want to ask God for? Beatrice thought a little more and then decided no, she wouldn't tell. God's very busy, my darling, can't you tell me what you want? Children shouldn't bother Him for things they can get from their fathers and mothers. Beatrice's face lit up. Only God could do what she wanted! And she went away to think about what she was going to say.

That night she prayed for Madeline. Would God please make Madeline like other children? She kept her eyes closed and talked to Him for a long time,

telling Him what a good girl Madeline was, how everybody loved her, how Madeline had to sit in a chair all the time because she couldn't play with the other children, how wonderful it would be if God made her well. She could hardly fall asleep, thinking how wonderful. She became excited and happy. Tomorrow when she came to school, Madeline would run in and yell, look, I'm all better! Then Beatrice would tell her how she had prayed to God because He could do anything. And she laughed into her pillow, thinking how wonderful it was going to be tomorrow, and she wished it would hurry up and come.

Something must have gone wrong. She couldn't believe her eyes. Why, Madeline was just the same! Beatrice stared at the wheel chair coming towards her, grew flushed when Miss Wilson took her by the arm and led her away, and then she went off to sit in the corner by herself. It worried her all day long. Maybe she was not a good girl. Maybe that's why God wouldn't listen. Maybe because she had laughed and God thought she was joking. Maybe she wasn't supposed to laugh and God got mad because He thought she didn't really believe He could make Madeline better. Maybe - She thought and worried about God till night.

Oh, please God, listen. Madeline's such a good girl. Why shouldn't she be like me? I'll be good to her always, I promise, good to everybody. Only please make her all better by tomorrow, please God. Look, I'm not laughing, I mean it, I'm crying. And I do believe you can, dear kind God, I know you can make her play and walk and everything. I'm sure, honest. And she kissed her pinkie finger to Him and crossed her arms over her chest and sobbed quietly so that Addie wouldn't know what she was doing.

Maybe it would take time. Maybe God wanted proof that she was a good girl, that she believed in Him. Maybe He wanted to see if she would stop praying after two times.

She didn't tell mama about it, exactly, but she tried to find out what was wrong. Mama looked at her in a strange puzzled way. She teased her for having secrets from mama. Then she got angry because Beatrice remained obstinate and silent. A baby like you, what do you want from God? And she scolded her and sent her off, saying she didn't want to be bothered any more with such crazy ideas, until Beatrice began to cry and said it wasn't for her but for somebody else, and she looked so miserable and helpless that mama became really worried. What do you want from God, she repeated anxiously, a baby like you? Tell me, darling, I'm your mother, I won't tell anybody, I swear.

I can't, Beatrice gulped, I promised God, it's a secret.

But your own mother, darling, God doesn't want you to keep secrets from me. Mama stood there, worried and sad. She didn't know what to do with the child. You're too young to think about such things, Beatrice. Don't you know you mean more to me than my eyes? What wouldn't I do for my children? God forgive me but even I don't know much about religion. So what do you want me to say? Forget about it, darling, wait till you're older. Maybe you'll be smarter than me. Maybe someday you'll understand about God and religion better, who knows? And mama turned away because life was such a mystery, she couldn't even understand her own baby.

Then one day Madeline didn't come to school and Beatrice kept thinking that it had happened. Maybe Madeline was learning to walk this minute! Oh God, you're wonderful, her heart cried, thank you, thank you, dear dear God! And

even the next day she didn't say anything to Miss Muffett because she kept thinking that Madeline had to get used to walking and that her family was so excited that they didn't want to let Madeline out of the house right away and that Madeline would have to practice at home for a few days before she came to school again. And Beatrice remembered to pray to God every night, promising to be oh so good and thanking Him over and over again.

But one afternoon Madeline's mother came to school to get Madeline's things and Beatrice heard her tell Miss Wilson that Madeline was in the hospital again and that the doctors were going to operate on her head and Miss Wilson said she was terribly sorry but not to give up hope. And after Madeline's mother went away, Miss Wilson and Miss Muffett shook their heads at each other quietly, looking sad. Then Beatrice knew she would never see Madeline again and she ran into the wardrobe closet and cried in the dark, her head buried in the children's coats.

If God could do anything, why did He have to let Madeline die? Mama explained that there was a heaven where all good people and children went. Sometimes, it's better that way, darling, they're happier there than here, she said, stroking Beatrice's head. But why couldn't God make Madeline better so that she could be happy alive? She was too young to understand. She would have to believe and wait. It was the hardest thing she ever had to do.

*

Winter that year brought terror; Jack the Ripper was its name and cry. In every household and on every street there was cold fear and scandalized indignation. The papers were full of pornographic report; each day added a new victim

to the crime. He was reported seen in every neighborhood - a black cloak, black gloves, a long beard, a lame walk - suspicion clothed him in a hundred disguises. The legend stalked into classrooms; children were afraid to go alone to the toilet, to be left alone in the playground, to walk through the streets, to play in the park. Chalk marks appeared on doors and blackboards: a skull and crossbones, an X sign with arrows. Notes were found in shirt pockets and book bags: Beware the black hand.

Papa went to school to investigate. Mr. Lansing assured him it was a prank and that definite steps were being taken to find and punish the offenders. Severe talks were given in the assembly; teachers set up a guard against chalk carriers; vigilante committees were assigned to various posts during recess periods. Mama warned Addie not to lose sight of Ben or Beatrice for a moment, thought she didn't dare to keep them truant from school. She tried not to let them know how worried she was. Papa said, nonsense, but Jack the Ripper continued to evade the police.

To Beatrice it all seemed somehow connected with Hallowe'en. Boys with spooky masks went around swinging black socks full of chalk dust. Stories were told of ghosts who came at night out of their graveyards. Eerie pumpkins smiled out of candle lit sockets. There were witches and owls and black cats. Children in grown up costumes walked about begging for alms. Jack Frost came riding by on the wind and left marks on the window panes. Jack the Ripper meant all of that to her; it was only a make-believe scare. You shivered but you never saw anything real to be scared of.

So when she had to go to the toilet one morning between recess periods, the teacher gave her the wooden pass and she skipped out of the building across the

school yard. At the door she stopped, looked in and listened. There was no one in sight. The first aisle of toilet booths was empty. She walked along slowly, looking for a leg, a dress, a familiar form. The second aisle had higher seats. She turned and walked down that one, looking from one side to the other. Suddenly, a boy jumped out of a booth, said, hello, kid, and ran off laughing. She was too pleased to see someone to be frightened, though she knew boys were not allowed to use the girls' toilet. She wished he had waited for her. There was nobody else in the second aisle and she decided not to look through the last one because it was too far from the door and it seemed more closed in at the back. So she skipped back to the first aisle and took a seat near the open door in order to watch for anybody who might come in. Just as she started to button her drawers again, she saw something slip around the wall of the entrance - one, two, three, four, five - a black hand! For a moment, she was paralyzed, her eyes like stones, then she turned and fled, unscreaming, to hide where the boy had stood. She almost slipped as she climbed up on the high seat and backed herself into the corner of the booth. Three big girls came running in a few minutes later, laughing and shouting. They found her standing there, motionless with fear, and wordless, clutching her dress. It was hard to get her to talk. She simply lifted herself into thearms of one of the girls and held on tight. They took her to the office, where Miss Dawson, the tall gray-haired principal's assistant, took charge. But Miss Dawson could learn no more than, I saw a black hand. Miss Dawson was a tall woman with a harsh voice, a sharp nose, thin lips, a gaunt frame, and cold blue eyes framed behind a pince noz. Her manner was as severe as her looks and the children

avoided her with awe. This was different. She could detect a genuine case of shock. The Borger children were not given to mock exaggeration. So she took off her glasses, softened her voice and adopting a gentle manner, tried to soothe the child. Finally she sent for Addie and Ben and sent the three of them home with a note suggesting that Beatrice be kept out of school for a few days.

Her fever increased towards evening and mama sent for Dr. Rausch. He advised that she be removed from the children's bedroom. It was diphtheria. Vaguely, she knew she was being carried, that she was in mama's bed. She smiled and fell asleep. The dragons awoke her; they were fiery monsters with flaming eyes, their tails locked and twisted in lashing fury. Smoke pitched from their nostrils; their teeth were triple rows of tented stones; huge scales fell from their burning hides. Fire burned in her brain, branding her eyeballs; her chest was a furnace lighted by coals in her throat. Green, orange. Yellow, red. They were coming towards her.

Where baby, what do you see?

Writhing, snorting - each flame a tongue dry-licking her. She tried to back away from the roughening heat; her skin was parched, thirsty. Then under her the ground cracked; out of a thousand tiny cells water bubbled up. She fell back exhausted, cool.

It's the light, she wants it out.

The dragons slinked away into darkness. Blue and purple trees came out of the forest. She was safe now; they would watch her.

It lasted a few days and at the end she was weak, pale. Mama brought her hot broth, a chicken wing and a nice pineapple pudding. The bed was scattered with.

cut out paper dolls but her eyes were too heavy to watch the scissors. Dr. Rausch came every day. She wasn't afraid of him. He had a nice smile, a cheerful voice and cool gentle hands. He made a face when she took her medicine; he knew how terrible it was. Then they shook hands and smiled because the nasty stuff was down and was going to make her well again. Mama played a different game with her; she made believe the medicine was the most special kind of dessert. She measured the teaspoon carefully, licking her lips and rolling her eyes. But that wasn't such a good game because it couldn't last. The medicine was bitter, smelly. Dr. Rausch said she was the best patient in the neighborhood, even better than the grown-ups, because she didn't make a fuss and knew what was good for her. It made her feel smart, responsible.

During her illness, the neighbors came in to help. They watched by her bedside while mama went shopping and then stayed to talk a while when she got back. In this way, Beatrice learned much that she wouldn't have learned in school.

It seemed that Mrs. Weaver's son, Henry, was giving her a lot of trouble. Mama asked who the girl was and Mrs. Weaver said she didn't know, but whoever it was, she wanted her son to do the right thing, though how he could get married on his job, she was afraid to think. Then mama said the same thing had happened to a boy she knew, a dentist. And from such a good family, too. He had broken his mother's heart. And Beatrice knew she was talking about George and it seemed it was his fault that Tanta Mutter had died. Did he marry the girl? No, but they made some kind of settlement. She wasn't really his kind. Those young foolish girls. Men, of course, what could you expect? And was there a baby? But mama said so because she noticed that Beatrice was not

sleeping and she whispered something to Mrs. Weaver and they both went into the kitchen to finish what they were saying.

Another day, mama's Cousin Jeannette, who was Mrs. Bromley, came to see her and they started talking about Terry who was the oldest daughter and very beautiful, and it seemed she was having a lot of trouble, too. Terry was married and had a baby girl, but Cousin Jeannette said it could never be right when it started wrong. What business had a kid of seventeen to run off like that? It must have been going on for two months before anyone knew anything about it. How could a mother watch a big girl and check up on everything? Naturally, she trusted Terry. Wasn't she her own child? But there, you see, you never could tell. It happened in the best of families. Of course, it served Terry right. She would have to leave that loafer eventually; things couldn't go on as they had been going, not much longer. And then Terry would have to come back home, with her baby. Cousin Jeannette sighed and shook her head at mama, saying, I guess you think I'm a fool, but what's a mother for?

And it seemed to Beatrice there was a lot of trouble in the world and she couldn't understand why it was so hard for things to be right. Papa and mama, she and Addie, papa and Ben, Henry Weaver, George and Tanta Mutter, Cousin Terry - why couldn't they all be happy and friendly and stop having trouble?

Mama kept her home from kindergarten the rest of the term. There were many school holidays, so Addie and Ben were home a good deal, too. It was a very cold winter and mama kept them indoors, though Ben went sleighing when there was snow. Addie taught Beatrice a new game; it was called Society. They took turns being Mrs. Vanderbilt, Mrs. Astor, Mrs. Morgan and Mrs. Rockefeller. They

were rich, famous ladies and they had parties in front of the French mirror. Mama gave them cookies and milk and they each sat on one side of the dresser, Addie showing Beatrice how to set her 'table' for tea. Everything had to be very dainty and fancy, the way they talked, what they said, how they sat, what they served, how they ate - everything had to be different. First, Mrs. Vanderbilt invited Mrs. Astor to tea and then Mrs. Astor invited Mrs. Vanderbilt to tea. If Addie played hostess first, Beatrice had a hard time thinking of a new and better transformation for the cookies and milk when it came her turn to serve. If she was first, which was rare, then Addie took advantage of being second by making it seem somehow more important and special to be last. Addie often cheated, too. Sometimes, she stopped the game before Beatrice had a chance to show off - she was too tired, she said, or she found some fault with Beatrice and wouldn't continue, because, she said, she was only doing Beatrice a favor in playing with her at all and she would toss her head and go off, leaving Beatrice to fume and rave. She tried to be cautious, to let Addie have her own way but sometimes she got mad. Why couldn't she have some good ideas, too? Did Addie have to take all the credit? That's not fair, she would cry angrily and snatch the scarf which she had planned to use as a table cover away from Addie who wanted to use it first. Of course it meant that the game had to stop right then and there, but Beatrice didn't care. It wasn't right and Addie knew it wasn't! But Addie simply put her tongue in her cheek, lifted her eyebrows and prissy-walked out of the room. Then Beatrice sulked, feeling righteous and abused. Now she had no one to play Society with. But she wouldn't run after Addie or apologize, either.

Why, how do you do, Mrs. Vanderbilt? Such a charming place and what darling cups - my dear, wherever did you get them? And did you meet Lord Fauntleroy

at the races today? But do sit down and tell me all bout it. My such luscious chicken salad and however did you make this refreshing beverage? You are a wonder , dear lady - Addie knew just how to make it right. Beatrice tried to play Society with Birdie; it wasn't the same at all. Birdie just nodded her head, repeated everything that Beatrice said and waited till the cookies and milk were gone.

Addie, please don't let's fight. Sisters should love each other. Why can't we play nice and friendly? Please promise, Addie, will you? But Addie only looked at her queerly, twisted her lips and refused to talk about such things.

Beatrice sighed; she wondered why Addie was so different from her. Mama said because Addie had always been a sick and nervous child and for Beatrice not to bother her. It made Beatrice feel very hurt; she always tried to love Addie, but Addie wouldn't let her. It made her unhappy to see stupid Pearlie make Addie laugh. She couldn't understand why Addie preferred to play with Pearlie and be a follower, instead of being looked up to as a leader by her. Addie said she was just jealous. You want to be as big as me, wear all my nice clothes, be in 6A, play with my friends and everything! But you're only a baby and a pest, like your name, bzzzz! That made Beatrice cry because Addie was trying to hurt her on purpose.

It became a habit; there was no day without tears. Something seemed to go wrong each time. Mama said she was getting cranky because she had nothing to do. Beatrice shook her head and sobbed; it wasn't so. She knew why she cried. Something always happened that shouldn't. It was meanness mostly. Why should anyone want to hurt anyone else? It was hard to figure out. By accident her finger got into Addie's glass. Addie refused to drink from it. Then, after mama

had changed it, Addie kept edging her fingers along the table towards Beatrice, to touch her soup bowl, her glass, her plate. It spoiled the whole meal. Finally, there was a fight and mama lost her patience.

Or Ben would run in late for dinner, his stockings torn, his hands dirty, his hair wild and papa would give him a terrible licking, saying, is that how I brought you up, to be a bum and hang around lots? And Ben would run around the table and from room to room, trying to get away, and he looked so scared and worried, that Beatrice couldn't bear it.

Please, papa, don't hit him - he's not a bum - he was just playing! And mama would get in the way and then there was another fight and afterwards, when it was all over, the whole day was full of pain and her pillow wet again.

Even when it started out right, it ended wrong. Like the day mama dressed her in the pretty flowered dress that she had always loved and Elsie said, oh, but I never got my sister's old dresses, look at this new one I just got. And even though it wasn't nearly so pretty as Addie's, it made Beatrice cry. After that, she never wanted anything of Addie's, she wanted new things of her own. She gave mama a lot of trouble about it and then spoke to papa about it, too. Why should Addie have everything? And then she surprised papa by saying, I never see you give anything to Ben! Which wasn't true because papa had just bought him a tricycle, but she knew what she meant.

But Addie's the oldest, mama said, so she comes first.

Well, then I'm the youngest and Ben's the only boy, so we should all be the same. Papa started to smile, then shook his head and turned away, because mama gave him a certain look which meant, now who's spoiling her?

There were other things that bothered her. When any of the children came to her house to play, she always brought out all her toys and let them play

with them, but when mama let her go to their houses they kept everything to themselves and acted very show-off. They would say that their toys were better than hers and cost more, which was a lie and a terrible thing, because none of them knew how much the toys cost and they kept changing the prices to make them higher each time. Then they began to fight about whose father was richer and though Beatrice wanted to tell them about all the money she saw papa count on the dining-room table every week, she knew it was a family secret and that she had to keep it to herself. But she was sure that papa was the richest because they were the only ones who had a piano and a victrola and now mama was buying new furniture for the house. She started to boast just as they did, though it grew very tiring and she felt it was wrong, because what difference did it make who had more money and why should she make anyone cry?

It was bad to lie; it was a sin. And yet, she was always discovering lies. It seemed that everybody lied, even mama, though mama said there were white lies that God forgave. When children lied, mama said, their parents had to be punished because God knew that children couldn't sin. But Beatrice said she didn't want mama to be punished because of her and she wouldn't lie. She wished she had someone to talk to about lies because Addie wouldn't and Ben only said, who's lying, show me. And he rubbed his thumb against his nose and started to box in the air. Then one day she found Edna in a lie and she wanted to leave the house because Edna had put a sin on her mother, but her big brother, Eddie, was there and he stopped the fight by saying, if you cross your fingers and say nix under your breath, then it's all right, you're not lying. Beatrice looked at him thoughtfully for a moment, wondering if he was joking, but since he looked very serious and she saw that his fingers were not crossed, she believed him.

Promises meant even more. To promise was to bind yourself as though to God. Promises were holy. And yet, how lightly they were broken. Awe, shame, confusion robbed of her speech. To promise something - it meant to be sure, absolute! Nothing could or dared to interfere! You promised - there was no worse charge, no greater accusation. She could hardly bring herself to utter the sacred phrase, I promise. She had to stop and consider, toweigh the importance of the project at hand. Will you be mad if I can't, if I try and nothing happens? She had to be guaranteed a release. She began to exact all kinds of terms and reservations for her promise. Her friends became impatient; anything to agree and get on with the next thing. Broken promises shattered the day into wounded, broken pieces. Trying to put the pieces together left her cut and bruised. How could anyone make a promise and break it?

On a Saturday when mama took Addie and Ben to shop on the boulevard and left her at home with papa, he told her that if she was a good girl all day, he would get her something nice. What, she teased. Oh, you know, something special, just leave it to me. And he winked knowingly as though there were a secret between them. A little dog, maybe, she asked, already delighted with having one. He waved his head in a non committal way. She waited to give him time to consider. He only smiled. Pro - mise, she suggested carefully, not wanting to catch him unfairly. Huh! The smile exploded. He knew his customer. A promise was a promise - he remembered how many times; pretty smart, aren't you? Well, we'll see what mama says first. She breathed a sigh of relief and a rush of joy and respect went through her. Papa understood - it meant more to her than getting his promise. She ran over and kissed his hand fervently, then left him alone while she started to be a good girl in her own room.

When the wagon load of new furniture arrived and the moving men came in to take the old furniture out, Beatrice felt that a major event was taking place in her life. Never to see her dear old house again! Her eyes flashed from object to object as the men began to tie ropes around heavy pieces and to get things ready to remove. There were her lions on the buffet drawers, the carved legs on the dining-room table, the leather lounge where she had lain with measles, the French mirror in front of which she played so many times, mama's bed with the white posters, the scarecrow clothes hanger, the faded blue rug on which she had left how many dancing steps, the sturdy chairs with wooden figures and leather seats - she ran into the bathroom, locked the door and sobbed as though her heart were like to break. Dear, dear house - and she saw the separate pieces over and over in her mind, all the beloved, familiar things, wondering where they would go and how the house could ever be the same without them.

Only the children's bedroom furniture had not been replaced because, mama said, it was too small a room to fix even if she wanted to - if they ever moved, she promised, she would buy a new set for the girls' bedroom and give Ben a room to himself. The landlord made some changes, too. The gas light fixtures were removed and in their place electric lights clicked on and off. The bulbs were not nearly so nice as the vivid colored gas flames, but mama said she was glad because she wouldn't have to worry about danger any more - Inventions, she marvelled - what a wonderful world. I can remember riding on a trolley car pulled by horses. And mama would begin telling what a wonderful place America was, how the world was changing every day and who knew what it would be like in another hundred years? Then Ben would start chanting, we'll be pushing up the daisies in a hundred years from now. And mama laughed saying look who's talking.

Maybe I won't be here, but you, the things you'll see, just wait - America, inventions, God knows what.

It was a strange place for the next few days: her room as it had been Now and for a Long Time, then the rest of the house as it was Today, Yesterday. She wandered back and forth, trying to make the time One, and soon, she saw the new as it was meant to be, very new and expensive and beautiful. There was a long table in the dining-room now, with four sides. It was made of a dark, shiny mahogany that matched the piano, nice to look at, to touch, like a smooth wooden mirror. Everything was very plain and simple, with straight legs and even surfaces: the table, the buffet, the china closet, the serving wagon, the chairs. No more lions or carved designs. Papa said fine rich-looking things didn't have to be fancy. He said the beauty of the furniture was in the wood, the finish, the clean-cut outlines. He told mama that a lot of ornament and decoration showed poor, cheap taste. A beautiful woman doesn't need any trimmings, he said, and winked with one side of his face. Mama didn't answer but you could see that she thought papa was very smart. She made new curtains for the windows and heavy brocade drapes; the new dishes and silver and cut glass were set out so you could see them at their best; the new oriental rugs went down on the floors. As for mama's bedroom, it looked like a movie set. Addie said it was grand, but she wished they were living in a nice new house to go with the furniture. Then mama said confidentially, you just wait, you'll see. And she described how she would fix up a living-room, what the girls' bedroom would be like, and the kind of big, modern kitchen and up-to-date bathroom they would have. It made Addie very excited and she said she could hardly wait till they got out of this dump, and wouldn't all the neighbors be jealous? Papa said not every father was so good to his family, and it was true. None of the neighbors had such a

nice home, with a piano, a victrola and now even a telephone. Though mama thought the phone was a waste of money. What's the use of having a telephone if I can't call anybody? But papa said, never mind, you can always call the office, because he wanted to keep up with the latest ideas and modern inventions. My children aren't going to stay behind, he said, no sir! And he called in a new piano teacher to give Addie lessons because the first one was a quiet lady who charged very little and he didn't think she was a very good teacher.

Mr. Ernest was an Italian who had studied music in Europe and was very important looking. Addie was scared of him right away. He was a tall man with long brown hair and almost gray eyes. He had very big fingers and when he played, his hands covered the whole board as he went up and down all the keys, both the black notes and the white. Papa sat back and listened to him well-satisfied; his head nodded and his shoe kept tapping softly on the rug and he smiled, looking at mama and Addie impressively, because he appreciated good music and knew a good thing when he heard it, though he wasn't a musician himself. Then Mr. Ernest looked at Addie's old lesson books and made a sour face. Papa showed he agreed by sucking in his cheeks and nodding his head. That made Mr. Ernest say they would need new books and papa said, yes, sir, anything you say, I want my daughter to have the best. So Mr. Ernest wrote down the names of two books he wanted and told papa where he could buy them.

Addie was so nervous, she played everything badly; even what she knew by heart was full of mistakes. Mr. Ernest stopped her every minute until he had heard about ten different pieces, then he said, all right, that's enough, we'll see what we can do. Before he left, he pinched Beatrice's cheek, and papa said, it won't be long before we start this young lady, too, and Mr. Ernest shook his

head approvingly. As soon as the door shut, Addie began to cry; she was afraid Mr. Ernest was going to be too strict for her, but papa said, nonsense, it's only the first time; wait till Mr. Ernest really hears you play. I bet you'll be as good as he is in a year! But of course it meant that Addie would have to practice very hard and study her lessons every day.

For the first time, Beatrice was glad she was so young; she didn't like the idea of it at all. She preferred to sing and dance; then she was free to do what she liked in her own way. She did not share papa's enthusiasm for the opera records, either. Some one else did the singing and the words were unfamiliar to her. She hated having to keep still and listen though she enjoyed watching papa listening. This was a dreamy papa, who heard and felt what no one else seemed to. How he loved the magic sounds of a human voice! Like a bird, he would say and hold his finger up to the end of a long held note. Scales and trills moved him deeply; he shook his head and stared at the ceiling. Caruso and Galli-Curci were his favorites. Also, he loved religious melodies; old, prayerful ones. The music was mournful, solemn, liturgic. Sometimes, he fell asleep, listening; his eye glasses and newspaper fell to the floor as his hand slipped silently down, his head rolled gently to a side and his body eased into the slow rhythm of a quiet slumber. Beatrice would smile, not knowing why; she respected his peace, his privacy of mood.

Mama was less discerning; she often disturbed him with her chatter. Or she would hum as she moved about, rustling the silverware, stacking the plates. She couldn't seem to remember about the music and that he was trying to listen to it; only rarely did she sit down to hear some record and then her attention was short. Papa could only shake his head and indicate by a ssh that she was spoiling

his enjoyment of a great thing. Mama would look back at him innocently, her face simple with apology; she meant no harm.

But if mama had no ear for fine music, she had heart and feeling for the songs she sang when they came to her. They were old, familiar tunes, those she had always sung. Some were gay, lively songs. She would flirt with the words, make eyes at Beatrice and sometimes, lift her skirt and start dancing about the kitchen. They had some good times alone. But mostly, mama's songs were sad, the words full of lamentation and remorse: parents deserted by their successful children, wives recalling the fair days of courtship - old tales and folk stories; they remained with mama; she never forgot them. Beatrice couldn't bear to listen to them; their grief overwhelmed her and she thought she would die. Was the grief in the songs themselves? Or in the singer? That mama should contain so much - no, she wouldn't, she couldn't hear more.

Please, mama, something else, something different - And even when mama obliged her with something light, Beatrice knew that mama's mood remained, apart and unchanged. And at last, Beatrice would have to leave mama alone, a stranger to everything outside, aware only of the grief within.

Mama, papa, Addie, Ben - she drew circles around each one and tried to merge them into a hoop which would fit her just right. Either she was poor at juggling or the circles refused to come together; they kept rolling away from the boundary she had defined with herself as center; they turned and sprawled on their separate orbits, defying the laws of a single will. She decided to spin hers towards theirs, instead. She decided - how congenial! Now fitting herself to one, now to another - shouldn't that make it right? And when it didn't, each of them spinning separately and apart from herself, she wondered what was wrong and why it couldn't be.

It seemed that nothing fit together; everyone and everything insisted on being separate. Her mind was a series of vexations. Everyone should be good, should love. But there was bickering and spite, hostility and envy. Right, wrong, mine, yours - her mind raced from one view to another, unable to connect. True,good, happy, she rejected the deeds, preferring the words. The words were beautiful. She loved their beautiful meanings. They spoke to her of a beautiful world where everything and everyone was good. How well she understood papa's sense of pride and respect, of dignity. How superior he seemed to those who lacked that sense. She compared him with Mr. Weaver, Mr. Hartman, Uncle Nathan, with all the men she knew, and always they seemed dull or meek, petty or foolish, or merely ordinary and somehow unimportant. Papa might be many people, but all of them, she felt, had interest, had character, had some indefinable quality which set him apart and lifted him above the unimaginative, everyday world of common men and just plain misters.

But then, she saw, there was a difference between having a quality and using it: papa in the presence of Mr. Schumann at the office and papa in the company of visitors at home were not proud, respectful and dignified in the same way. Mama once called him a show-off, and another time, Beatrice heard the neighbors say the same thing of someone they were talking about; it must have been papa because they wouldn't mention his name while she was there, playing nearby. It meant that papa looked up to Mr. Schumann and not to the others. Why, because Mr. Schumann was better and more important than the others? Papa must have thought so; he liked successful men, men who were ambitious, smart. Then why didn't he have friends like that, visitors like that? Was he ashamed of his home, his family? It puzzled Beatrice, made her wonder about this papa whom she couldn't seem to understand. Dates with the boys downtown - was it there that

papa found men like himself? Pride, respect, dignity - and then, papa drunk. The words and the picture refused to come together.

And the way he treated mama, was that honor like honor thy father and mother? When they began to fight, to talk and look mean, she wanted to sink through the floor so she wouldn't have to see and hear them that way. Didn't they know it was wrong? And yet they wanted her to be good, and obedient, and nice at all times. When she told mama about it, mama said, don't be silly, we're only joking, but from the look on mama's face and the things she remembered, Beatrice knew it wasn't so and she was dissatisfied. And if you were supposed to be nice to everybody, as God said,then why did people make fun of each other? It was mean: he's a wop, what does he know - leave it to the Irish - just like a Jew - talks like a Greek - niggers, what can you expect - tight as a Scotchman - Yankee, greenhorn, common laborer, stuck-up German, boorish Russian, pig-headed Dutchman - there were names, descriptions, and criticisms for each and all. Then there wasn't one standard, one way of living. Did God know that? Beatrice looked, listened, frowned. And she went on learning beautiful words and loving those.

The children were no better. They wouldn't show her how to jump, no matter how long she kept turning the ropes, and when someone finally said, give Beatrice a chance, she immediately lost it by tripping on the first count. She stood there, abashed, her face tense with the hour's expectation and moment's defeat. Maggie O'Daniel gave her a push and laughed; there was contempt and mockery in her voice, her eyes. Beatrice grew red with hurt, anger, hate. You stop that! I won't be pushed! Maggie turned; saw a face. Automatically, her hand went up and out. There was a sharp stinging blow. Beatrice rushed towards her blindly, tears in her nose and throat. She tried to bite, to kick, to seize something in her hands A few more slaps, then the two were separated, the others crying, shame, Maggie, hitting someone half your size! Maggie's

black curls swung back: she was healthy, scornful, self-confident. Aw, go -, I'd rather play with the boys, anyhow! And she turned and walked away, while a chorus began, tom-girl, tom-girl, but they all scattered and fled before her.

So you let Maggie beat you, huh? It was Ben; he had heard. His face was dark with resentment. If Maggie were only a boy! Well, what are you going to do about it, let her get away with it? Beatrice shook her head, trying not to cry again. He took her into the outside hall, squared off by four apartment doors. We'll show that Maggie a thing or two, come on! It was her first boxing lesson. Ben showed her how to make a fist, how to hold her arms, how to circle and to strike. Now give it to me - harder - harder! He let her thump his back, his solid shoulder. It hurt her hands, especially the left one, but it made her laugh. How she loved her big brother! And he was strong, loyal. He told her not to say anything to mama, to make believe they were only playing, and at the end, he cautioned her to stand up and fight for her rights. But he looked doubtful, worried - after all, she was small, and a girl, his sister. He was quite disturbed.

It only made her next humiliation the worse; Maggie looked astonished, then slapped her anyway. The other children laughed; Beatrice clutching her fists, rolling her arms, circling. I want to fight, she kept saying, the tears running down her cheeks. The children led her away, trying to comfort her. She went back to playing with Birdie and Edna and Elsie, on the stairs, in the alley, in the house. The street was too rough, too hostile - she would have to wait.

Nor was she the only one who thought so. There were parents who ordered even older children, both girls and boys, to find other play areas; too many fights and accidents were beginning to mark the street unsafe for fun. It became common report that nice children didn't play on the street. The street meant Carlton Avenue. And Carlton Avenue meant six different territories. All on one

block, which reached from the bottom of the hill, where the elevated trains and trolley crossed Lancaster Avenue, all the way to Eagle Avenue, which connected with other streets that led to movies, boulevard shops, and the world outside. A long block with two sides. From the hospital to the Center was one territory. The six new apartment houses fronting the Center was another. The old houses reaching to the corner made a third. And across the street, set back from the opposite curb were the three territories determined by the private houses, those brown and gray stone houses that leaned against each other across narrow breezeways. Interrelations were discouraged; only rarely did the children make friends with those who lived 'outside', whether that meant 'across the way' or 'up the street' or 'down.' Within each territory was the further restriction called family friends. For not all of the families within a given territory belonged to it in the same way. There were groups within groups, divided by age, interest, religion, nationality - each sought its own level, secured its own barriers against non-members.

Lena Cohen, the tall pimply girl with thick glasses, had no friends; she was a quiet, studious girl, who played the piano. Music did not see her ugliness; it responded to her touch, which was beautiful. Behind the door of the second floor rear apartment where the ungainly Lena lived with her old sick mother the gates of heaven opened and the voice of angels arose, flooding the ear with harmonic melody. Sometimes, a door was left ajar and a passing foot paused. Women shook their heads and sighed; it was a pity. They felt sorry for Lena.

While in the apartment next to Lena's lived Etta and May Goldman who were attractive looking, well built and carefully dressed. But about them there was an air of something that was not quite right, perhaps a divorce, perhaps something worse, who knows? Nods were polite, few words exchanged. No visitors

came, no invitations extended. But a few months later, a young married couple moved into the neighborhood and everybody said the wife was a former model or show girl, you could easily tell that kind. A fast type, they said, meaning a bill-board version of a new movie star or the face and figure on a magazine cover. Her name was Sally, besides. Expert with hair bleach and the use of cosmetics, her beauty dazzled. She was a silk blonde with red tinted nails and blue veiled eyes; black set off her milk white skin, something adorning - a belt, a large jewelled ring, a string of pearls, a bracelet. Sally in the thinnest sheer hose on stilted satin pumps made eyes bulge. And Sally became the friend of the two young women. It was obvious that they didn't belong. Their world was alien to the domestic one on Carlton Avenue of cooking, cleaning, laundering, begetting and minding children. There was something about these three that insulted women in aprons carrying a shopping bag, with thick cotton stockings wrinkled over swollen ankles and varicose veins, with peasant faces and untidy hair. But Beatrice liked them, liked the way they walked ; she would call them by name and let her hand rest in theirs. And they always had a smile for her and a look that was free, untrameled. They were like her Cousin Terry, she saw, and she decided she would be like them when she grew up, because the older Weaver girls were so plain and serious and the older Stone girls and everybody else on Carlton Avenue except Sally, Etta and May.

Meanwhile, she had her own play territory carefully mapped out for her by a diligent mama. She was allowed to mingle only with the nice boys and nice girls of the nice families - and mama specified which, with infallible instinct. Now that Beatrice was of school age, she could include some boys and girls who lived in houses adjoining 650. Not many, just a few, and then only within close range.

She was still confined to the center of the block , on this side of it. Though mama continued to look for her and call for her periodically when she was out of sight.. But one time Tom Rankin fell down and hurt his hip and Beatrice helped him home. And then she stayed and played soldiers with him and what a spanking she got from mama that day! Mrs. Rankin just stood there and couldn't say a word. Because mama had been boking all over for her; she had gone from house to house, climbing stairs and questioning the other children, and no one knew where Beatrice was. And mama was almost crazy with worry, all out of breath and nearly crying. She even quarreled with Mrs. Rankin. How could you let a child stay so long? Why didn't you let me know she was here? If Tom did that, how would you, his mother,feel? Beatrice was shaken, dragged and scolded all the way back and got a licking in the end, besides. Never to do that again, it was a promise extracted by a mama determined to enforce the lesson. But alone in bed, afterwards, Beatrice felt, sorely, how unjust and unreasonable mama had been. If she had lost something and then found it again, she would have been happy. Mama should have hugged and kissed her, laughed for joy. It was a strange way to act after being so worried and frightened. What if something had really happened to her? She saw herself dead and mama being sorry she had ever said or done any unkind thing to her. It made her hurt less and she fell asleep, having forgiven mama and made the score even between them.

Another time, the children were playing Follow the Leader in Carl's hall; they followed him up and down the stairs, imitating drums, bugles, animal cries; they hopped, walked sideways, took two steps at a time. And then they were on the roof. Everyone giggled; they had been warned. They felt daring , nervous. Carl caught their eyes; he pretended not to see and went on skirting the roof wall,letting his hand beat time to marching feet. The street was far below them and a soft wind blew. They ducked under clotheslines, feeling the

wet clean smell of soap and starch and bleachings. Suddenly a cat started out from the top of the roof ladder; it looked at them and blinked, ready to run. Carl dahsed towards it. Tail executed an arc and four legs spring: the cat landed softly on the lower roof ledge and remained there, four stories above the street. Cries of hurrahs pursued Carl. There was no way for the cat to escape, except through the hall window below the roof. The children rushed down the stairway, screaming and shouting. Hands flew to the window, urging, lifting. The cat stood outside, eyeing them blankly. Here, pss, pss, here - hands and voices pleaded at the window. The cat pawed where it stood, made elliptical strides along the narrow ledge, and mewed. Carl forced a clearing; the children crowded back from the window, straining in corners and against the steps. Beatrice bit her fingertips, wanting it to be over. After a moment, Carl held the cat; he was tense with excitement.

Did you see him jump? A cat always lands on his feet! Cats have nine lives! I bet it can fall all the way down to the street!

Go on, Carl, drop him!

Beatrice grew taut, trembled: their voices hammered against her ears; her eyes burned; her legs quivered. The cat was the weak dread within her, helpless in playful hands. Her alarm became cat's claws, the wriggling shape outside the window. Blindly, she pushed her way down the stairs. She was running, crying small mews in her throat, voiceless with terror. And then she was paralyzed: the cat falling, landing in the yard, running through the basement into the hall, seeking revenge, meeting her. And its eyes angry slits of glass balls, its paws torn and bleeding, its mouth terrible with spitting shrieks and sharp ripping teeth - How she got down the four flights, reached 650 and up to the first floor, inside the door, she never knew. That play could be so cruel, so

terrifying - no, she couldn't understand, couldn't imagine. That children had done that to a cat! She could see it mounted on the ladder, poised on the wall - cat, c a t. She had never liked cats; they caught mice. Maggie's brothers kept a cat in the butcher shop; sometimes, she saw it sleeping in the window after the meat had been taken out and the store was closed. She never wanted to stroke a cat like some children did. And what if the cat had not landed on its feet, what if it had dropped and died - the bones broken, the fur split open, the teeth and eyes all bloody on the ground? She couldn't go to the window, look down. How they had laughed, their faces close and whispering, their eyes evil and their hearts mean - How could nice Carl do such a wicked thing? Then danger wasn't only on the street; it was everywhere. It was a frightening secret; she didn't dare speak of it to anyone. But it made her more anxious than before; she studied faces, noticed sounds of laughter, listened to tones of words, watched the meaning of eyes, saw the way hands moved. It robbed her of most of her playtime, took most of the fun out of the playing. Sticks and stones can break my bones but names can never harm me! The children chanted the words over and over, but saying them didn't make them true, because what they didn't say spoke even louder. And they did feel themselves harmed because the names did hurt. Beatrice saw that, knew that.

For a while, she stopped playing with the other children. She had her big doll, Tamu. Mama kept it on the new dresser in her bedroom because it was so beautiful, with long, soft, light-colored curls and pretty blue eyes. It even had teeth which showed in a smile and there were dimples on either side. Mama dressed Tamu in real clothes and changed them from time to time. Beatrice loved the blue outfit best, the one with the little feather in the hat and the separate jacket over the dress. Now she wanted to play with the doll. By myself, she

told mama, knowing how careful she would have to be. It was hard for her to convince mama. She showed mama how she would hold the doll; it made her happy just to hold it. It filled both her arms and the face was right next to hers, cool against her cheek and smooth. She could see mama was thinking about it and worrying, although the doll was really hers. But she knew it was a special privilege because there wasn't another doll like hers in the whole world. Mama kept saying, I know it's your doll and I want you to enjoy having her, but don't you think she's better off just sitting up there? Besides, she's so big and heavy for you right now, why not wait till you're a nice big girl and then you can play with her all you like? But Beatrice shook her head and her eyes filled with tears: she had no one else to play with! Couldn't she put the doll in the carriage and just wheel it around, please? Mama gave in at last, but she said, if anything happens, you'll be sorry.

She and Tamu had a good time and it wa s fun playing in the house again. She wheeled the carriage up and down the foyer and when mama wasn't busy in her room, they played in there. Tamu was very good and smart; she did everything Beatrice told her to. They played nurse and baby, Society, school, girl friends, mama and daughter - they never quarrelled or did mean things. When she told Tamu stories, Tamu just folded her hands, looked at her and listened with a dimpled smile. Tamu was very dainty and clean, too, and Beatrice tried to imitate her when she ate. But when the bright sunny days of Spring arrived, mama got annoyed with her. A dark foyer and a closed-in bedroom, what kind of place is that for a child to play in? Why can't you play with Birdie and Elsie downstairs? Mama gave her some apples and cookies and told her to share in the children's games. She hated to leave Tamu. Birdie and Elsie were so dull; they never looked or said or did anything new, different, interesting. And it was no fun

showing them new things because they couldn't show her anything new in return. She left them to go shopping in the stores with mama. At least she could look at many things and hear the big people talk. But people were not very different from children. She studied their faces, eyes, hands, voices, gestures - until they, too, began to weary her. Always the same. Once you learned that the loud voice with the singsong rhythm belonged to the woman with the basket hair and shifting eyes, it didn't matter what she said. Even when it was supposed to be something new, an event - guess who I saw last night, where do you think I was this morning, did you hear what happened to Mrs. Crane yesterday? Whatever it was, it took on the dullness and sameness of the speaker and so lost its novelty.

Only her doll was always new and exciting. Today you're the Princess Moreen - a name never before spoken or heard slipped out of her mouth, and for a morning or an afternoon, the Princess Moreen had a strange and beautiful existence. They went to a far away place, met many people and had wonderful things happen to them. It was all very secret and mysterious; only the two of them knew about it. Finally mama consented to let her take the doll outdoors. Now she could play in the sunshine and have Tamu, too. She wheeled the carriage carefully into the hall, hoping there was nobody to see her and went quietly down to the door. On the stoop she paused, deciding. The street was too open, big - there were women in the stores, the janitor was cleaning the sidewalk, loud wagons were going by. Beatrice walked on to the alley, set the carriage to one side andswung the gate open. There were four steps down from the street. She wheeled the carriage carefully into the alley, then returned to close the gate. It was a narrow yard, between the walls of t e adjoining houses. Ma-ma! She looked up to the windows on the first floor. Mama was in the kitchen; she waved back and smiled, l ook, I have something for you. A brown bag was let down from a ball of string. Beatrice could hardly stand still. What fun! Her hands reached up impatiently

as the bag floated slowly above her. Inside, she found a sandwich of cream cheese and jelly; it was her favorite 'something to eat.' She threw mama a kiss. No one but mama could think of such a darling game. She wished she had something to tie on the string for mama; it looked so lonely creeping back up through the air.

Tamu seemed very pleased to be outdoors; in the sun her hair looked like spun corn silk and her eyes were bright as jewels. Beatrice threw back the carriage cover; it was too warm and besides, the dress would get all wrinkled. Tamu was telling her how much she liked to be outdoors. They couldn't decide right away what to play first. There was too much noise coming down from the street and from the back lot. Some boys were running after a ball, their school books hanging from loose straps. They were playing 'hookey' - Beatrice bit her lip, thinking, if Ben were to do that! From a window high above someone emptied a pitcher of water into the yard; the plant in the window box had had enough. It landed in a broad plash near the carriage. Beatrice stared up at the rows and lines of windows, wondering who might do the next strange thing. She wished there were no one else in the yard but she and mama and Tamu. It made her worry. Supposing the water had fallen closer? She could see the carriage ruined and Tamu drenched from shoe to bonnet. Where could she go? Gray walls and window frames looked down at her, unanswering from a lane of sky and pavement. She stayed where she was, within herself, and drew Tamu closer.

In the country, Tamu, we'll have a big garden, with trees and flowers and birds and we'll go to the fairies' parties. And they talked about what they would wear and whom they would meet and about all the lovely things they would see and do. Before Tamu could warn her, there was a flurry of running forms. A dog rushed wildly by, leaping and chasing a stick tied to its tail. Everything

whirled, tipped. Then they were gone. Beatrice lifted her head and sat up, crying. Her hands were smeared and her knees scratched. It had happened so quickly, she couldn't understand why she was sitting on the ground. And then her heart stopped and her blood seemed to leap outside. Tamu! No, it couldn't be, no-no-no-no! Terrified whines clogged her throat, her chest seemed to somersault under her dress. Nobody must see! She grabbed the head, the arm the piece of foot, and cowered over the fallen carriage, trying to put them all together as they had been a minute before. Then desperately, she wheeled the carriage into the basement, not knowing where else to hide. For long minutes she stood there, till the shock slowly trembled through her, leaving her quivering. Her hands grew wet at her mouth, her face loosened, her eyes began to blink. Tamu under the coverlet, inside the carriage, hidden, still. The head twisted from its neck, dangling from a cord. The arm severed. The foot cracked and chipped. Tamu, her beautiful, wonderful doll. She threw herself across the carriage not daring to look, to see. And into her pain crept her mother's warning and the blind fear of the thing done and still another pain. Tanta Mutter. So that those they loved who had died could go on living afterwards. No, it couldn't be, it wasn't so, it hadn't happened! Her hands twisted the coverlet, arguing denial, her lips protested. And when she could no longer sustain the lie, she lifted herself slowly and stood there, glued to the darkness, with the light coming through the door behind her.

It could never be the same again; the thing done was the thing lost and gone for ever. Nothing could bring back the time before or undo what had been done and was finished. Pale, her eyes dark with the sorrow now flowing gently within her, she said, no. This was not Tamu nor Deena nor Suzette nor the Princess Moreen nor

any one she knew or ever had known. This was a broken doll. She looked at the porcelain head with the painted glass eyes and artificial hair and knew. She would not have it to play with again.

She told papa not to have it fixed, to put it away. She stammered over saying 'throw it away,' but by no other sign did she betray the secret loss she had suffered. Mama fussed over the doll a long time; if she could just put it together so that it might wear a disguise and sit on her dresser again. She thought of a Spanish costume, with a long mantilla coming down over the hair and covering part of the face. Finally, she gave up. Talk about the doll stopped and the incident was allowed to be forgotten. Except on occasion, when mama thought it necessary to remind her to listen and obey, if she didn't want to be sorry again. And each time she winced, as she did when picking on a scar, till a tough skin developed. It was her own No Trespassing sign. <u>This</u> had nothing to do with <u>that</u>. Her judgment refused to admit that one mistake, however grave, condemned her to a lifetime of failure. She would have to go on without Tamu.

She was back where she started, with herself. But center was only a fresh starting point. Mama, papa, Addie, Ben, the house, the street, her playmates, the neighbors, the stores - she knew those directions, where they led and how far. And now she was ready for a new direction. Center whirled, radiated, eddied out and returned. Center was safe harbor. Careful. Nothing on the horizon. Outside was chartless, unexplored. She knew the paces around the deck, the close distance to shore. But somewhere was a new adventure. Surely sometime she could test the outer rim. She listened and looked, aware of the tug at the anchor and the restless sails in the breeze.

Then one day she heard Mrs. Singer tell mama about her husband's brothers. It seemed they were rich. Life had been much kinder, much better to them than to Herman. Mrs. Singer sighed, vexed. Four brothers - and I had to marry the

unlucky one! How they live! You ought to see Ruby and Frances. Like queens. They have everything. Honestly, I'm ashamed to have them visit me. And she went on to describe the neighborhood where they lived, the palatial homes, where servants did the work and governesses took care of the children. It was a life of ease and luxury. Ruby and Frances belonged to clubs. They traveled. And Mrs. Singer described their clothes.

Beatrice thought of fat, untidy Aunt Ethel of the smelly, dark house her cousins lived in, and a flicker of compassion crossed her face - she knew just what Mrs. Singer meant and how she felt. Tsk, to think that plain, dull Birdie had aunts like that! But she put aside petty jealousy to hear what was being said. As she listened, her imagination began to stir. Maybe they would come to visit Mrs. Singer. Then she would see them, too, because mama was Mrs. Singer's best friend and was always invited into her house when there was company or anything special. Mama helped her to bake cakes, and if there was a dinner, she showed her how to cook certain things, and if papa came, he brought a handsome bottle for toasts and drinks.

She ran to tell Birdie about the coming visit. Birdie grew very pleased about having such wonderful cousins; it made her feel proud and important. She talked about <u>her</u> Aunt Ruby and <u>her</u> Aunt Frances and told Beatrice that <u>she</u> would have to call them by their last name, Singer, because <u>she</u> wasn't their niece. Beatrice agreed, swallowing hard; if she could just <u>see</u> them! She pictured their beautiful house on a river; it was surrounded by trees and flowers and had broad entrances with marble stairways. Inside, it was like a hotel, with elevators and thick rugs and guards in uniform - she had never seen a hotel but she was sure it was a little bit like the main house in thecountry, only much

bigger and more wonderful. And then all the children had their own private bedrooms, each one by himself, with extra playrooms and nurseries and everything. She could see the furniture, the silver, the exquisite dishes on the large dining-room table, the linens, the curtains, the glass bathroom and the electric kitchen. She fancied herself living in all that spacious loveliness, with mama grapeful and always charming, Addie kind and friendly, Ben a little gentleman, his goodnature unchanged, and papa at his best, a dignified, and cultured host. It was an ideal picture, a goal - shevowed to make it come true. It was somewhere in the future; she could see it like a light coming towards her. Indeed, life would be glorious, different from all this.

The eagerly awaited visit came on a Saturday afternoon; Beatrice saw an automobile pulling up to the curb. From the driver's seat, a lady kept glancing out at the street, looking for a house. Beatrice hurried alongside.

Is this No. 650, the lady called, her gloved hand on the window frame. Beatrice took a deep breath. Yes ma'am, she said and wondered if this were Ruby or Frances. The lady gathered up her bag and some packages and locked the car.

I live here, ma'am, I can tell you if you want somebody. Through a blue veil she caught a glimpse of beauty; it was the right face.

Can you, dear? I'd be so glad. I'm looking for a Mrs. Singer who lives at No. 650, but I can't see the number very well.

Yes, ma'am, it's not a very nice house. But my mother is a very good friend of Mrs. Singer's. She lives on the third floor, we live on the first. I'll take you there, if you like.

The lady laughed and thanked her, asking her name. It was thrilling to have

the lady all to herself; she felt as though she were cheating Birdie. By the time they arrived on the third floor, she had told her all about herself: her age, school career, hopes - She wanted to add I want to be a lady just like you, but there wasn't time.

Ruby, what a surprise! And look at me - oh, I'm so ashamed. Why didn't you let me know - tsk, the house! Come in, please come in. Children, get washed, your Aunt Ruby is here! Mrs. Singer bustled towards the bathroom, calling behind her, take your things off, Ruby, the bedroom is right there - I'll be right in.

Ruby laid her packages on one of the beds, folded her gloves into her bag, and glanced around uncertainly.

I'll take your hat and coat, Beatrice said, I know where the closet is. Such a nice hat and coat - she bore them off proudly, feeling privileged and responsible.

Oh, it's Beatrice, I didn't see you. Mrs. Singer saw her stepping out of the closet in the foyer. Thanks, darling, you're a good girl. And Beatrice, do me a favor, go tell mama to come up. I have company. Tell her if she can buy me some nice cake, we'll have tea. Hurry, darling. The last was whispered at the door, then she turned back to shout, quiet, children! Remember, I want you to behave yourselves in front of Aunt Ruby!

Beatrice hurried down the stairs as fast as she could and then had to climb back one flight because she had gone too far down. She was breathless as she banged on the door.

Ma, Birdie's aunt just came, in a great big car, ma, and I took her upstairs

myself and Mrs. Singer said to come right away and to please bring some cake. We're going to have a party! She clapped her hands together and looked at her mother, wide-eyed and smiling brightly.

All right, all right, don't be so excited. I still have to get dressed, you know. And you stay here until I'm ready to take you up.

Beatrice followed her into the bedroom. She fastened mama's stockings to the garters while mama jerked and pulled at the corset. What to wear - the blue was stained, the black had opened along the arm seam - She decided on the jersey. She went into the bathroom to fix her hair and put some powder on her face.

Beatrice, you wake papa. Ask him if he wants to come, too. Saturday afternoon and he's asleep. I never saw such a man. Sleeping, always sleeping. Well, go on.

Ma, you know papa gets mad when anyone wakes him up. She didn't want to wait for papa; she had been gone long enough.

And gets mad if he misses anything. Go, you know how.

Beatrice hesitated for a moment, then went into the kitchen, filled two glasses with very cold water, put each on a plate and added a lump of sugar next to each glass. She carried them in carefully and set themdown on the dresser near the bed. She picked up his newspaper from the floor and rustled it a few times. It had no effect. She held her breath, reached up and tugged his shirt sleeve, then quickly turned to get one of the plates holding the glass of water and lump of sugar.

Pa, didn't you call me for a drink? Well, here it is.

I didn't call you, he muttered, gazing at her stupidly; his lips felt dry. All right, give it to me. Thanks. He sat up, placed the lump of sugar on his

tongue and drank the cold water slowly. When he had finished the first glass, Beatrice handed him the second and began telling him about the visitor. Mama camein during the account.

Well, come on, if you're coming. Or, you can meet me there. By the time you wash, comb and perfume yourself - she gave him a curt nod and left. Beatrice waited until he stood up and stretched his arms. Good, he was awake.

Now don't forget to come up, pa. A grunt that was 'yes' sent her flying after mama.

Oh yes, the babe's quite clever. She'd make a good little actress, no doubt. Why, good Lord, you ought to see her dance and sing with all the trimmings! Papa lolled his head and waved his hands into the air. As he leaned back, his aristocratic belly swelled forward.

Ruby nodded, smiled, and set down her cup. She was pleasantly aware of the dark brown eyes which followed her every movement.

I don't see why not, she replied, everybody's taking it up these days. My husband's been after me for months. He thinks I ought to take my two kiddies out to the Fox Studios, in New Jersey. He has a friend there who keeps asking me to give the movies a try. She dug in her bag and handed him a card. He pursed his lips, reading it.

Hm, that so? What do you say, chick, would you like to go? He pinched his nose, looking over at Beatrice.

Oh pa, can I really - She could get up now; she ran to the side of his chair and lifted a kiss to the bald top of his head. He patted her shoulder lightly.

Oh, I guess it's all right with me, but how about your mother? Too old fashioned, eh, Katie girl? His lips wriggled derisively and a faint suggestion of scorn came from his nostrils. Beatrice looked at mama anxiously, fingers sweating the armchair.

But, Mrs. Singer, please excuse me for asking, how can she go? You see, I don't know anything about making pictures. You know what a mother's like. I'd like to have more information.

Of course! I didn't expect you to let Beatrice go alone. Why not come along the first time and see what it's like? If this card means what I think it does, we ought to be paid for the experience. Who knows? At least we can try and see.

Beatrice's face glowed. Mama's shoulder lifted helplessly and she nodded as the appointment was made for the following Monday morning. Aunt Ruby would call for them in her car and bring her two children, also. Papa and Ruby laughed at the idea of their all becoming famous stars and Ruby made up names they would use in the movies. Gypsy Day - Beatrice could see her name and picture on every bill-board. Coming in a new picture soon.

Birdie and Florence sat around looking doleful and unhappy. Then they jumped up and ran to their mother, crying, we want to go, too - Aunt Ruby isn't her aunt, anyway - if Beatrice can go, why can't we? Mrs. Singer gave them a slap in reply.

Not my children, no, sir! She sat back in her chair firmly, and the children ran crying into their bedroom. Mama stirred uncomfortably under her corset, while papa gave Aunt Ruby a meaningful wink. Clearly Birdie and Florence were neither pretty nor talented. Beatrice sat quietly, afraid to show her happiness, lest it be taken away for the sake of the others.

Her restraint lasted into the evening and through the next day. Mingled with the hope was the fear, and time till Monday dragged in anxious suspense. Ben looked at her in a brand new way; he laughed, then stopped, surprised and uncertain. Addie's eyes narrowed and her face thinned.

I bet if you were going to school papa wouldn't let you be in the movies.

Besides, you aren't in the movies yet. Wait and see, they might not even take you. She ran off to play with Pearlie, making a lot of noise.

Mama had to be treated with silk gloves, too; she seemed to have a million things to do suddenly. She moved about irritably. As if she didn't have enough to bother with! Of all things, becoming an actress at her age! It was ridiculous, crazy, the whole business. Now she would have to arrange with Mabel Singer to take care of Ben and Addie for the day. Though Addie could, for once, manage the lunch and supper if everything was prepared in advance. Why did everything have to happen to her! Mabel was smart, and said no,and put an end to it. But then, Herman Singer wasn't Max Berger, and Beatrice - well, even Ruby Singer had agreed she was a remarkable child. Now she was practicing, singing and dancing all by herself. Mama began rummaging through their clothes closets to see what they could wear.

Monday morning came early; Beatrice was the first one up. She went into the kitchen to set the table for breakfast, wishing Addie and Ben would hurry. Nothing must go wrong, please God! She helped mama with the beds and dishes, then swept the kitchen floor to get rid of any dust or crumbs that mama might see at the last minute. Alone, she kissed the mirror and admired herself in her best party dress. The big white silk hair ribbon made her look tall, almost like a big girl. Papa advised her how to behave. Then he gave mama an extra bill for spending money, and kissed them both goodbye and goodluck.

Mama sat with Aunt Ruby in front. Muriel and Murray sat on either side of Beatrice in the back. They were nice children, very gay and goodnatured. She wouldn't let them see she felt shy or strange. To size each other up they resorted to the usual test, Murray boasting that <u>they</u> had a car. Undaunted, Beatrice replied that her father had not yet made up his mind which was the

best car to buy....Well, they had two maids and a governess who gave them lessons...Oh, but children ought to help their mothers take care of a house, and $8 for a governess, why, Addie and Ben went to the best school there was and next term, she was going back to the kindergarten. In the end, they were social equals. Both mothers listened, amused; it was satisfying to know that their offspring had not been trained in vain.

Come on, kiddies, you'll want to be next to me when we cross on the ferry. The car stopped at the Fort Lee entrance and mama exchanged seats with the children.

Water? Her stomach flipped. As the car moved into line, Beatrice grasped the coat rack and started to her feet.

I don't want to go! Stop, I'm afraid! Stop, please, I don't want to go! Panic flooded her mouth. The children turned to stare at her and laughed. Mama leaned forward protectively.

What's the matter? Ssh, everybody's looking, Tell mama, darling, what is it? Again the car lurched forward and eased to waiting, the motor ready.

Stop, stop - I - don't - want - to - go! We're going to drown! Stop - oh - ma! In front, the gales of laughter mounted.

Here we go, Beatrice, right into the water! Watch all the cars go into the water! Here goes!

Please, don't do that. Mama took her on her lap, embraced her closely so that her eyes were hidden, and bent down. Now stop that, silly girl. Would all the people go on the boat if they knew they were going to drown? You aren't stupid. Listen. The ferry, the boat goes over the water, not the cars. The cars are inside the boat, way up high. The ferry carries them

from one side of the water to the other. Look for yourself. Come on, show Muriel and Murray that you aren't afraid. Why, she's a big girl, she was only playing!

The explanation quieted her. She lifted her head, looked behind, and saw the boat gliding along smoothly. A smile lit through the tears. The children sat huddled up front. Beatrice saw the backs of their heads, whispering together. She didn't say anything, but by the time the ferry had crossed and moved into its slip, she was ready to go back. It was fun. She looked forward to the return trip.

The country was beautiful with Spring over the winding riverside. The car purred smoothly as it followed the course of the road. Large landmarks moved backward, flew past; a house slid down the hill and out of sight. It was funny to watch the world run away. The sweet woody air had a taste of fresh greenness, good to smell, to swallow. You grew dizzy seeing the trees rush sideways one after the other; you couldn't follow them, they went so fast. After a while the car stopped at a restaurant at the side of the road. It was a strange thing to be sitting so far from home, to have someone ask you what you would like, to see mama chatting at a strange table. But best of all was the big ice cream soda which came in a paper cone instead of a round glass; at the bottom were small pieces of fruit which seemed to taste much better for being lifted out of the sloping point on the end of the straw. Mama took out a ten-dollar bill to pay for the treat, though Aunt Ruby said she really shouldn't. Beatrice was glad the children saw, because it made up for riding in their car.

After that, it wasn't far to the studio. They rode through a few small

villages and then came to a big lot which was enclosed by a high wall and a gate. Long lines of cars were parked outside and they had to drive almost to the end of the wall to find parking space. Then they had to walk back to the gate. It didn't look like movie land at all and Beatrice hoped it was different inside. She was disappointed not to see the actors and actresses around. And where were the lovely gardens and mountains and deserts she had seen? The two day excitement and the long trip seemed wasted; she felt tired and suddenly indifferent. Aunt Ruby showed the man at the gate a card and he let them through. Not everybody was allowed to come in; people stood about, waiting. Inside looked curiously empty and drab, only some wooden buildings here and there. They entered the largest one where a dirty flight of stairs took them to an office. Crowds of people stood or sat about, waiting and talking. They seemed to know one another; there were greetings, calls. Occasionally, a door opened and a girl beckoned, next. Finally, Aunt Ruby caught the girl's attention and asked her to take a note inside. The girl looked surprised; she became respectful. In a few minutes, the four of them were summoned through a door marked Private. Beatrice brightened up. Then it must have been a mistake. Of course, it couldn't have been the right place. Those people didn't look like actresses.

Private was an office where a man in rolled up sleeves sat at a desk full of papers. It was dirty and smelled of cigar smoke. He got up when he saw Aunt Ruby and shook hands. He was short and pudgy, not at all important looking. The brightness vanished again. It was taking a long time to get started.

Gypsy Day, eh? The man tried to be friendly, to make them feel at home. And you can dance. Well, we'll let you do the Russian Cassotsky! Everyone

laughed. Then he wrote out two slips, one for Aunt Ruby and the other for mama, They were not going to be together. Beatrice bit her lip; she wanted to ask why.

Just follow the crowd down the back stairs to the dressing rooms, someone will show you where to go. The man opened the door and said goodbye, again shaking hands with Aunt Ruby. Everything was going wrong. How would mama know what to do, where to go? Without help, how could she act Gypsy Day? Murray and Muriel didn't even notice her when they went off; they were having too much fun.

Mama showed the written slip to a doorman. Mob scene, he said and pointed to a staircase. They came into a big dressing room almost like the one at the beach where they had changed into their suits. A woman in a striped dress took their slip and showed them to a closet.

Put your things in here. You'll find costumes on the table out front. Something will fit you, I guess. I'll try to find something small for the little girl, myself. She marked the number of the closet in her book and left them. Mama looked around in wonder, not sure she wanted to start undressing.

Crazy, honestly! To come all this way, by car, mind you, to get pushed, questioned and shoved down here. A movie career, some joke! They undressed in silence. The dismalness of the whole thing was insulting. Beatrice hid behind the door when the matron returned with her costume. It was a rough cotton gown, once white. Was that all she was to cover her nakedness with? She felt tears rising.

Well, Beatrice, how do you like your costume? Mama looked at her

in dismay, then shrugged her shoulders, walked out in her underwear and returned with the same cotton gown, sizes larger. A colored belt dangled on one loop. She tied it around her disdainfully. Hm, fancy!

Mama, do you think I could have a belt, too? At least it would help a little.

Yes, there are lots of them lying around. But the lady said we must hurry. Come, Beatrice. Mama locked the closet and removed the key. Barefoot, they walked into an adjoining room bordered by long tables and mirrors. All the women were dressed alike in rough cotton gowns, some blue, some tan, with different colored belts. They were busy with make-up, combs and cotton shawls. From the talk it appeared it was to be a Russian picture. It had two well known stars in the lead. Beatrice tugged mama's arm - her belt, don't forget. There was a robe on the table with a broad sash. Mama removed the sash and tied it twice around Beatrice, then made a big bow where it tied in front. For a minute they looked at each other, then started to laugh.

Mama, you look so funny! Mama stared down at herself and began to mumble. Leave it to Mabel Singer to know when she was well off. Max should see them! Smart ideas -

A man went around with a make-up box. He stopped to paint mama's face: eyebrows, cheeks, lips. Beatrice could hardly restrain herself. She giggled, pouted, squirmed, worried that her gown might loosen and expose her to him. And at last her face felt like a mask.

A shrill voice called across the room, ready, line up! There was a general movement towards the exit. Mama stayed in the rear. A young woman

gave her a friendly smile.

So, look at this one, isn't she cute? She took Beatrice by the hand. And you are going to dance? Oh, do not listen to him! It will take plenty of time yet. Here, let's practice a little, yes? She drew them apart to a less crowded area. Her arms crossed high, her head began to nod in obedience to her foot, her voice tra-la-ed strong accented music and soon, Beatrice was following her. This is what she loved! Their eyes flashed, catching signals from each other; their lips parted for deeper, fuller breaths.

Ah, sweet, you are adorable! Come, again, ready? And they started once more. It went quicker this time. They whirled, stamped, clapped and sided, now to the right, now to the left, back to back, arm in arm, out to the side, the opposite way, they parted, met, bowed and finished. Hooray! There was applause, cheers. Beatrice looked around enraptured.

And will we do that in the movies? she asked.

My, yes! You and I together, hm? Such a sweet child, she said to mama. Mama shook her head indifferently. Even the big ones were children. Didn't they have anything better to do, didn't they have any homes and families? A sigh escaped her. Well, it would soon be over.

The shouts grew louder as orders were repeated and at last the crowd moved out of the dressing-room. They came into an open field on one side of a boarded fence. Everyone hurried to range themselves against it and to look through the seams. Beatrice found a crack lower down and flattened herself to peep through.

Ma, ma, look, it's -, here she is! Whispers cautioned her not to make any noise or the guard would take her away. There was a curious stillness of suspense, of concentrated interest. Even mama came to look. Suddenly, a

cavalry of horses swept into view! handsome beasts in colorful trappings, ridden by Cossacks, dark and villainous looking, with swords flashing in air and headgear galloping across the sky. The earth resounded to flying feet in a mingled tumult of dust, noise and motion. People scattered before the horses, running, falling, screaming.

A real pogrom, someone cried, it was like that! Soldiers driving the peasants before them, killing them. Tsk, how real it looks, how terrible! Beatrice clutched mama's hand hard, looking around from time to time to assure herself of the fence, the people the safety. Safety edged the horror with delight. Cruel, unreal, wonderful. The scene was repeated after more shouts, more orders. Action! Beatrice supposed the movie was being made, but where or how she couldn't see. She remained where she was, trying to look past the crack in the fence and far to either side.

It was over; the dust lay quiet on the ground. Mob scene next! The phrase was caught and passed around. Everyone began to run down the field in the direction of the booming voice. The young woman stopped for Beatrice, this way, follow me! A few more shouts disbursed the crowd into small groups. Action! The dance was ready to begin. Her partner motioned: three claps, three stamps, three nods. Beatrice followed her as before, aware only of the accented tune, the rhythmic steps. When they finished, she saw a circle formed around them. There was stamping, laughing, cheering.

All right, cut! They were moving off to make room for the next shot. They were returning to the dressing-room. That was all, Beatrice learned, that was all. No more, finished, going home.

We're only extras you know! The whole day for five minutes, that's how it is. Ah well, it pays. The young woman had a tired smile now; she looked

older somehow. She waved her hand and disappeared. As they filed back in, their costumes were inspected, then exchanged by the matron for numbered keys.

At the long tables, they found cold cream and absorbent cotton. Fingers reached competitively into the cans, snatching what they could. Shoulders vied for space in front of mirrors. There was a rush to clean-up, to clear-out. The cream had a sickening smell, a thin greasy feel; Beatrice was glad to have mama wash her face with water; the stuff on the cotton had looked awful. She rubbed her hand over her face to make sure. Her own skin, her own mouth. By the time they had dressed and were ready to leave, the room seemed deserted. The matron stood waiting at the door, hat and bag in hand.

Please, where do I go now? mama said.

Got your slip? Mob-scene, that's right. She directed them to the pay-office. Aunt Ruby and the two children were waiting for them outside.

I've been looking all over for you two, Aunt Ruby said, I thought we would never meet! Well, how did you like it? Mama's face made her laugh. Evidently, the others had not fared so poorly; Murray was eager to tell all about it.

You should have seen our mama. She looked beautiful! She was a court lady and we were pages. His voice travelled on, thrilled by all it reported on. Beatrice didn't care any more; she was too tired to pretend. And when mama showed her the two five-dollar bills they had earned, she smiled faintly.

When they were seated in the car once more, she noticed how dark it had become. No, she wasn't hungry .... she heard mama say sleepy ....when they got home.... Then the house was there, the same street, the stores. She blinked up at the lamp post and the lighted windows. She was tired, carsick, disappointed. The great event was over.

In the days that followed, the shock remained inside her, quiet in its

absorption. To mama it had meant only a day lost and some annoyance, compensated by ten dollars. In herself it had bred a strange conflict. She saw herself the subject of new interest, heard herself answering eager questions with proper enthusiasm. For a day she had been lifted out of the commonplace; she had seen famous movie stars in person; she had played a part in a great film as Gypsy Day, a Russian dancer. It sounded wonderful. Neighbors smiled at her, the children wanted to play with her. And yet, she knew it was all different; really a lie and not like that at all. The truth hurt her pride. How could she tell them that the movies they saw were faked? What she had seen stripped the illusion bare. In the dark movie house with the music playing was a world of black and white. There, everything was believable: the beautiful clothes, the vivid motion, the scenic magnificence. One did not think of squalid dressing rooms, smelly cold creams, cheap costumes, the booming voice, a barren lot in New Jersey, the waiting crowds. She thought of her dancing partner. A whole day for five minutes. They might not even be seen. Somewhere, a camera taking pictures. And out of all those people, only the stars and a few lucky ones would get the importance and attention of being there. Something wormed its way inside her, a secret knowledge; it gnawed her conscience, troubled her imagination. Was it the subtle indication of life, a movie? The moral drawn by analogy? Her Russian Casotsky a symbol, her partner a stranger accidentally met and mutually inclined, one with whom she had shared an experience so intimate, so revealing, that at the time nothing and no one else existed - alone, absorbed in the importance of self, oblivious to the circle around them and the world outside. A whole day for five minutes. All, that they might be inconspicuous and lost. Two dancers who would never meet again,

who would forget what the other looked like. Life, like a dance, ardent with anticipation, briefly rehearsed, quickly over. Five minutes for a lifetime's essence. Just like a real pogrom! Momentarily involved - in safety, or danger. A spectator, clinging to a fence. The substitution repeated on a screen for a still larger audience of actors and spectators; none but a few singled out by the camera; the rest not knowing where or how the movie was being made, what part of the motion they would make up, when the scene would end. And then to be obscure, one of the many-oned crowd. We're only extras you know. A tired smile, a wave of the hand. Ah well -

When a return visit to the studio was mentioned, it was not for Beatrice to decide. Papa stepped in and stepped hard.

After all, babe, it's almost summer and we'll be going on a vacation, and then in the Fall, you'll be busy with school. Better take it easy for a while and then we'll see.

With mama he put on an air of indignation. Now what did she think he was? Coming home to a cold supper and having to take care of two children. It wouldn't do. Good Lord, no! Mama merely looked at him, her arms folded high, and nodded her head - of course, it was all her fault, that's right. The requirements of a domestic world precluded the existence of any other. The short career was finished.

Again, it was Aunt Ruby who initiated the next idea. She had tired of small parts after a few excursions to the movie lots in New Jersey. For a week, she had done nothing else but go back and forth in her car, arriving early at the studio and returning home at night. The strict regard for dress, rehearsal and performance did not seem warranted to her. It was a long trip; the children grew exhausted, irritable. So now she was going to take her

children to a dancing school and what about Beatrice? Mama agreed to take Beatrice just to see. There was no promise or guarantee attached; just to see, that was all. Addie was getting angry. Why should Beatrice have everything? She would like to have dancing lessons, too! Mama said she had the piano and school.

Sure, Addie answered, everything hard. I get all the work and she gets all the play. Why don't you give her piano lessons, if she's so smart, and see how she likes to practice!

It was just to see. They all walked to the new dancing studio on the boulevard, together. It was on the first floor of a gray building that still smelled of fresh paint. A few children were already there. Some of them had changed into black slippers tied with laces across and above the foot. One girl wore a short fluffy dress which lifted and showed her tight white drawers as she made pirouettes on her toes. It was a class for beginners and young children. Murray was the only boy there. He didn't seem to mind; he ran sliding across the room and jumped all around, making turns in the air. A whistle blew when the lessonwas about to begin. The teacher was a young lady in dark bloomers and a blouse. She asked the new children to join in at the back while those in front went through the steps they had learned. She sat down at a piano and reminded her pupils what to do first and what came next, step by step. Beatrice listened, worried that she would not be able to follow. Muriel and Murray stood beside her, smiling. The piano started to play. The teacher talked while she played, emphasizing changes in rhythm and speed. There was a lot of giggling because of mistakes and not all the children kept together. Only two continued dancing to the end; one was the little girl in the ballet

dress; she stayed near the piano in the first row.

It was easier to learn the new steps. Beatrice imitated the teacher, never taking her eyes off once. The arms had to be round, graceful; the feet had to point sideways. Sway and bend, now to the right, now to the left. The arms could move the same way as the legs, or the opposite way. The teacher explained by showing them how. Her body moved softly, lightly, as though it had no weight. It was easy, if you followed her. Beatrice did, not seeing the children or thinking about them. Forward, backward, fingertips meeting, arms apart. Like a feather in the air, effortlessly. Till she caught the teacher nodding towards her, encouraging her, and then felt the children's eyes turning to look at her. Her face grew hotly red and her lips trembled; suddenly she was Beatrice again and her body heavy. Her arms fell and her feet dragged to a halt. She ran to where mama was sitting against the wall and, eyes lowered, said quietly that she would like to take lessons all the time, that she was sure that if mama would buy her dancing slippers and make her a costume she could learn how to dance like the teacher. But when she looked at mama's face, she saw a look that she knew wasn't for her because mama was only interested in showing her off; she smiled and winked at the teacher, proudly hugged and kissed her in front of Aunt Ruby, and said lots of nice words that Beatrice knew she didn't really mean. So when the teacher came over afterwards to talk to mama, it turned out just as Beatrice expected; mama said she would see, she had to talk it over with her husband. It was sad to say goodbye to the nice teacher; she was sure the teacher knew how she felt and she thoughtthe teacher felt sorry, too. Muriel and Murray chatted all the way down to the street; they had had a good time; they didn't talk about next time; they didn't notice how quiet Beatrice was. She walked back

to the house alongside mama, thinking about the dancing teacher and trying to remember the lesson. She hoped Aunt Ruby would say something to mama about continuing the lessons, but neither of them mentioned it. Mama must have signalled to Aunt Ruby not to say anything because she knew how anxious Beatrice was to be promised. Would papa help her? She tried to imagine how she could win him over to her side, how she would show him the new steps and tell him how the teacher looked at her. Tears rushed into her eyes, there was a stinging throb inside her nose. If she could only sit on his lap and explain how she felt, with hugs and kisses. No, papa wouldn't care how she felt. Nobody cared. And Addie would see to it that she didn't have anything special, dancing or acting or anything like that. She was just a mean, selfish, jealous thing, that's all. Well, she'd show them. She would practice dancing by herself. She saw herself in front of the big mirror, moving her arms and legs and head the way the teacher did - and then she remembered the mirror was gone and the furniture new and that mama wouldn't let her dance all over the new rug and get in the way of everything. Where could she dance? The hall was so narrow and the backyard was always full of kids and neighbors talking out of windows. When she got home, she went straight to her bedroom and lay down to cry her heart out.

Despite pleases, pleas and tears, the lessons were dropped. She was too young, mama said. Maybe next year. It was too much trouble. Why did she make such a fuss about things none of the other children had? Look how nice Muriel and Murray behaved. Because Aunt Ruby was going to take them there every week, Beatrice cried, that's why! Well, their papa was richer than hers. In the end, mama refused to speak to her about it, refused to answer her questions or pay any attention to the subject. That mama made nice remarks to Mrs. Singer and Mrs. Weaver only deepened her anguish and resentment. What did she care

about showing-off? She wanted to dance, to do something, to be somebody.

Somewhere she found room. Somehow she took time. Her body was a thing to command, to shape, to coordinate. There were so many positions, so many ways to sit and stand and walk and move, so many combinations of arms and head and feet - She practiced humming - quick steps, slow steps, running, turning, coming to an interesting halt. Mama said, see, why do you need dancing lessons, you can learn by yourself. But Beatrice knew she could not; there was so much more, so much the dancing teacher would have shown her. She danced but she was sure it wasn't right. She could feel that her body didn't move like a feather in the air, that she wasn't graceful all the time. And it was so important to her that every move should be beautiful. It was like the way Aunt Ruby moved her lips when she talked and the way that the other women talked, making ugly faces. It was like the way Sally walked, tall and even in her high heeled pumps, and the way everybody else shuffled and dragged their hips from side to side, carelessly. And it was probably like that with everything, the way you ate or got up from bed or used your hands or made your face look or anything at all. And how should she know all the ways to be beautiful all the time? Then she began to notice how children cried, how when they started, they opened their mouths wide, squeezed their eyes, wrinkled their noses and let out horrible screams. Did she look like that, too? She stood up on the bathroom stool to study herself in the mirror above the cabinet. Crying came easy to her; she kept her lips only slightly apart for the necessary breathing and sobbing; she made her eyes remain open while her eyebrows pulled the frown away from the top of her nose; she smoothed the lines out of her face by making it look natural. Even crying could be beautiful, she saw. She was satisfied. She would try to remember the way she looked in the mirror the next

time anything happened to make her cry. It took her a little while; her lips just jumped right apart and covered her teeth in an ugly crooked way, her cheeks creased up against her eyes and made her eyes like slits, while her cries sounded like a cat's. It wasn't easy to remember, not when the thing that hurt and started her crying took her by surprise and gave her no time to think about anything else, but gradually, what she looked like grew more important than the cause for her crying and that made her hurt less. Then what happened surprised her even more, because she got more attention now when it hurt less, than before when she hurt terribly and had just cried naturally. Addie would think something awful was the matter; she would stare and get pale, twisting her mouth nervously, wondering if she had made Beatrice sick and whether she was going to die. She would try to distract Beatrice, to make believe it was all a joke, to get her to laugh. Which Beatrice wouldn't. She had been fooled too many times herself not to feel her power a great satisfaction; now she could fool Addie and make her think that something was really the matter. So she let the tears brim over her wide open eyes, parted her lips, dilated her nostrils with each quiet gasp, and by imposing a dignified restraint on the motions of her hands, enhanced the effect of suffering by making it beautiful. Mama, t o, was frightened, though she pretended it was a joke, and sometimes, grew impatient, unable to discover any reason for such dramatic and tragic conduct. But Beatrice knew that she had won for her hurt a new importance, even respect. And it was that that she wanted, even more than she wanted to cry beautifully. Her aim shifted again: the end, not the means, was what counted.

She applied her new lesson to making faces. It was a practice long in use.

When you got mad, you stuck out your tongue, you made a face; the worse, the better. You twisted your nose, wrenched your jaw, pulled at your cheeks and ears, crossed your eyes, made barbaric growls - then ran away or made friends again. Since pinches, scratches, kicks and hair-pulling hurt, making faces was the next best thing. It was safer combat, less damaging, less painful. But was a way to get even. Faces became battle grounds. The more ferocious and hateful the expression, the greater was the glory and revenge. A truly unrecognizable contortion, so original that it could never be repeated again, ah, what satisfaction! Fingers, hair, tongue, eyes, nose, lips, neck, everything was brought into play, with a twisting, writhing, roaring, shaking - Such grotesque shapes! Pivoting the neck, whipping the hair, looking frenzied! To strike terror into the enemy's heart, to chill him with the intensity of your madness, ha, what could be more monstrous?

No, her face was not intended for such purposes. It made her shudder to think that God might suddenly freeze that look upon her face, paralyze her into that hunched and witch-like shape. Her eyes flared, her jaw stiffened, her body grew tense. No. She walked away, too proud to submit to the insult. Once, mama scolded a little girl she had come on in the act of torturing her face, and, momentarily resentful, shook Beatrice by the shoulder, saying, why don't you make a face back at her, forgetful how many times she had scolded Beatrice for doing just that. I don't want to look so ugly, Beatrice had answered, although it angered her that she could think of nothing to take the place of making faces.

It must have given mama a good idea, because try as she might, she had never been able to break Beatrice of the habit of sucking the second and third fingers of her right hand backwards. She could hardly imitate the gesture

when she wanted to show Beatrice her disapproval, to indicate at a distance that the fingers were where they shouldn't be. She had tried iodine, soap, a string, lectures and promises, to no avail. Beatrice continued to suck her two middle fingers contentedly. It was in the butcher shop that mama found her inspiration. She saw Beatrice watching with distaste an old lady leaning against the counter facing her and talking. Two loose front teeth stuck out as her tongue jabbered away. She was old, wrinkled, shabby. Thin gray hair showed under the dirty black shawl she clutched to her breast. The other arm moved with her words in lean, bony gestures. Her voice was cracked and unpleasant. But worst of all was the way her two front teeth bobbed up and down as she spoke, and she talked, without stopping, in a monotonous, rasping whine. How ugly she was!

Did you see that old lady, mama asked when they were once more out in the sunlight. Ugh. Mama nodded. That's what happens when you keep sucking your fingers and pushing your teeth out. Little by little, they get loose and - well, you can see for yourself what you're going to look like. That old lady did the same thing when she was a little girl. Beatrice looked at her, thinking of Ben's friend, Arnie, who had buck teeth. Oh my! Mama looked away, her face set. You can't blame me now, remember, I did my best to stop you.

It was awful - she could see herself as big as Addie, looking like Arnie, her teeth sticking out, her mouth always open. And then to be like that old lady! You mean it's too late, ma? Her teeth did feel funny; maybe they were beginning to get loose; they seemed a bit slanty already. Mama said she didn't think so, but she wasn't really sure; they would have to wait a few days to see. Beatrice stared at her guilty fingers; they were different from the rest, whiter, softer, even a tiny bit smaller. Supposing they didn't grow like the others? What

if they stayed white and soft and small like that? How would mama's hand look with two baby fingers left in the middle? She would have to tell Ben rightaway; he sucked his thumb. It meant they would have to stop being babies. Mama was forever saying it was a shame that a big boy like Ben who was nine years old and a big girl who was almost six, still sucked their fingers.

Ben laughed at her, saying that mama was only trying to fool her. She told him about Arnie and about the old lady. Then Ben got angry and sent her out of the bedroom. He's suck his finger all he wanted. If his teeth got crooked, that was his business. And he wasn't going to be told what to do by Beatrice or mama or anybody else. Mama shook her head. That thumb sucking, bottle drinking Ben. The doctor had said he would outgrow it. When that would be, goodness only knew; he was already nine. Maybe now that Beatrice was about to turn over a new leaf, mama sighed. It had never ceased to worry her that in Addie's case, she had done something wrong, made her stop sucking her finger before she was ready to, taken the bottle away from her too soon, something - because Addie had not had nearly enough milk and had been a nervous, delicate child. Something. She didn't like to think of those first years, when things had been so difficult for her - Max staying away whole nights and days from home, quarreling with her mother and finally causing that kind old lady to leave. Her mother, who had been so good, so sweet, so helpful. Would she ever see her again? Ach, what had set her thoughts going back to those days? Addie being so frail, yes. Coming, as she did, after the twins. Losing them in three weeks, after seven months of hardship. What a woman had to do through. And then poor Addie. Thank God, Beatrice and Ben were healthy children. Finger bottles - what was the difference? She praised Beatrice and drank a glass of milk with her, encouraging the child with cookies and smiles and happy stories

about her life. Then later, when she was busy by herself, her voice rose sadly, singing, sometimes when I think of my Rose Marie, Rose Marie, where the sun is shining and the sky is always blue - thinking of her mother and the unrecallable days of her far away, long ago childhood.

The day before promotion, Addie brought a note home from Miss Wilson, the kindergarten teacher. There was going to be a party for all the children and couldn't Beatrice come to school tomorrow morning? Beatrice was beside herself with joy; a party in school!

She looked for Madeline, wondering, hoping. One of the children asked Miss Murfet where Madeline was and the teacher drew the child to her and patted her head, smiling. Then they started games and songs. London Bridge, Blue Bell - they laughed, muffled their shrieks, restrained their feet, remembering it was school. Their decorations were all over the room: their colored paper chains hung above their heads, looped from wall to wall; their crayon drawings were framed in the window panes and made a border across the blackboards; festive basket cups lined the window sill, filled with mysterious things to eat. Then, after they were seated in their little chairs about their little tables - ice cream and milk and cookies! They giggled and squeezed each other's hands. Such a pretty party! Their tables set with gay doilies and napkins and everyone wearing a paper hat with gilt stars and streamers. Miss Muffet poured the milk into their little wax cups and set a few cookies on each paper plate while Miss Wilson went around serving the ice cream. There was chocolate and strawberry and vanilla and you could have your favorite color by pointing. Thank you's echoed timidly as the teachers passed up and down the tables. The children waited till the teachers were seated and then followed their example, taking

small bits of ice cream on their wooden spoons and looking very pleased. There was candy and nuts and a hidden toy in every basket, with a lolly pop face twisted on top. The baskets looked like dolls. Everyone ate slowly, wanting the sweets to last a long time. When the tables were cleared, various children were chosen to remove the spoons, plates, cups, doilies, napkins. They were allowed to keep their hats and baskets as souvenirs. Then their personal toys were brought out of the wardrobe closets and they were allowed to play with them until the bell sounded their regretful dismissal. Miss Buffet and Miss Wilson stood at the door to say goodbye. There were handshakes and kisses, and it was all very different from the first day when they had come together to begin kindergarten.

It was a day never to be forgotten and Beatrice went home to tell mama all about the party and the teachers and the children, and when mama seemed satisfied that she had heard everything about it, Beatrice went off by herself to go over the whole thing again, anxious not to forget anything about it. The fragments were pieced together and when they were at last filed, there was today and yesterday and the day before that and before that and into long ago, and she closed her eyes to decide whether it was better to go backwards to the beginning or to begin and come back to now, and her file tumbled out and spread all through her head, and little by little she put them in order and there was Maisie and then getting sick and going to the hospital, the bright lights and the white walls, and then mama's cool cheek and papa blowing his nose in the doorway and the handsome doctor, and everyone hiding in the cellar, then riding on a train and getting free ice cream sodas at Cousin Joe's store in Brooklyn and - but of course there was much more before that, and she had

to go back because she had been born ever so long ago and a great many things had happened - and she remembered what mama had told her about being a baby and then she thought of the time when there had been no Beatrice, only Addie and Ben, and then how mama had been a littlegirl a still longer time ago, long before she was married, and all the stories mama had told came rushing forward, about the inn and the horses and grandfather's dog, and there was no end and no real beginning and too many things had happened that she couldn't remember - and so she came back to I, Beatrice Berger, and my mama and papa and Addie and Ben, and it was easier to think about her own time as she remembered it, though that took a long time and she had to decide what kind of things to remember because she couldn't remember them all at one time - and finally she decided to sing all the songs she knew, from the latest one, Freckles, all the way back to the first one mama had taught her, Baby Shoes, and while she was singing the tunes in her head, humming, her mind kept running back and ahead to see if she had left any out or if they were in their right order, because otherwise she would have to start all over again.

But it was more than just a party, it was something much more. That part she couldn't tell to anyone, not even to mama. When Addie and Ben came home with their report cards, showing what classes they were going into next term and who their teachers were going to be, Beatrice made believe that she was excited, too. Even though she didn't have a report card, she knew that she was going to be in 1 A and that she was going to start real school next term. Who am I going to have, she kept asking, while Addie and Ben compared their marks and talked about their new teachers. Addie knew everything; she was in 7A.

I'm going to have Miss Carey; she's the best teacher in the whole school. When I was in 4A, I had old Mrs. Williams. She's dead now. Boy, you're lucky.

Was she strict, whew! I think you'll get Miss Hunter. She's Miss Carey's best friend, but you'd better watch out. They say she smacks the kids around something awful.

Ben grinned, nibbling on his new yellow tie. He didn't care. Teachers were all the same to him. It was papa he had to worry about. In school he got along the same as the rest of the kids, but at home - that was different. No matter who his teacher was, he would still have to do his lessons and study. His work was marked A, his conduct, B. Addie had all A's from beginning to end. Once she almost died and wouldn't go home because her teacher had made a mistake and given her marks meant for someone else. Papa said they had to get A's in everything, three times a term. Ben didn't. His conduct was always C till the end of the term, then they gave him B to promote him. But his work was A. Papa could beat him, lecture him and punish him, but just the same his work was A.

Addie, Ben, please, who am I going to have?

Miss Peters - we've told you a hundred times! There's only one 1A class, so who else could it be? They didn't pay her any more attention and she went away. Going into 1A might be fun next term, but right now, all she knew was that she had left kindergarten and would never be able to go back there again. That was what the party had meant, goodbye. Goodbye to Miss Muffet and Miss Wilson and all the boys and girls she had played with, and worst of all, Madeline, whom she would never see again, ever. That wasn't what made her sad, though, because she had already cried about Madeline all she could. She was sad because something was over, done, finished. Gone, no more - she remembered how many times she had said that in her high chair. Gone, no more -

and she would clap her hands because the apple had disappeared or because she had finished her oatmeal or because Ben wanted to hear her say that, holding something in his hand and then making it vanish out of sight. But this time, it hurt. It hurt inside, behind her eyes, because she could see the kindergarten room and the children playing all around her. Going to 1A and getting report cards and carrying books and sitting in real seats with desks might be fun but it could never be the same. The boys and girls would be different. She, Beatrice, would be different. Now, when she passed the kindergarten doors and looked in, she would smile and say hello to Miss Muffet - but Miss Muffet and the kindergarten room wouldn't be hers any more. Not ever again. So it was a lovely party to remember but it made her sad and she couldn't tell anyone why.

But it was nice having another birthday and being six years old. She felt that she was a big girl at last and that nobody could call her a baby any more. That made her feel very important. They were at the beach for the summer, a place called Long Branch, because papa said it was too hot in the city for him to stay there until the week-end. He could come out to the beach every day if he wanted to, whereas the country was too far. It was fun at the beach, though mama said it wasn't so nice for her because she had to do all the work. In the country they could stay at a hotel and she could rest. But at the beach, they had a small bungalow and there were always ants and sand all over the place. Mama didn't like that at all - such a dirty, messy life, she complained. But the sun was good for the children and she took them down to the water morning and afternoon. Of course they had their troubles with burns and sand bruises and mama got worried about Ben beinglost or drowned every day, but somehow they all put on weight and even Addie began to look healthy when her skinny

arms and legs grew tan. Ben got to look like a little nigger boy, especially when he laughed, because his skin got so dark. There weren't many people there but they had to keep together by themselves most of the time. Beatrice always laughed when papa went into the water. He looked so funny floating, with his big belly sticking way up. Only his head and part of his arms and legs showed, and they were so white! Papa was the fair type, mama explained, meaning light blue eyes, pale skin, blond hair. He had to cover himself up with newspapers to protect his skin. But the top of his head got red anyhow and blistered and peeled all summer.

The water didn't scare Beatrice any more, except when mama and papa carried her out to let the big waves dance up and down around her. Then she squealed and screamed and clung for dear life to the precious neck near her own and could hardly wait to be set down near the shore. Sitting at the water's edge had its terrors and joys, too. You sat with your back to the water and then a wave came up behind you and oh, what the waves could do! Maybe it would be a tame one that just crept coldly under you, tickling you as it spread to your feet. Or maybe it would be a breaker that climbed to your waist and then splashed all over, even lifting you off your seat. Or maybe there would be two or three little waves, one after the other, and they pushed you towards the shore. And then when the water went back, you had to crawl very fast to keep from sinking in the dark wet sand. Ben loved to make tunnels in the wet sand and see them wash away. His castles tottered and gradually flattened out. Beatrice made mud pies, packing her pail hard with her shovel, then turning it upside down, holding it a moment and lifting it off. Sandwiches and soda bottles were fun, too, though everything tasted sandy or salty, and you were just as hungry and

thirsty as ever. Or sleepy. Beatrice couldn't remember where she had fallen asleep, on the sand or in her bed, but it was nice feeling the sun warm on her and then the air cool and knowing whether it was day or night by opening her eyes to see.

Once Henry, the foreman, came out with papa and he asked Beatrice if she would like to go fishing in a big boat. Beatrice didn't, but Ben did - he begged very hard and then went off sulking because papa said no, it was too dangerous for little boys. That night they ate fresh fish for supper and mama said she never tasted better fish. They had a fish soup and fish balls and fish cakes and spaghetti and Ben never stopped asking Henry questions about the boat and the fishing and the catch. But that was the only time papa went fishing. He didn't like it. It was too rough for his taste. Mama laughed; she knew his style, the things he liked. He was the soft, easy kind of gentleman, who liked everything clean and dainty, everything in order. Fishing was all right for fishermen, she said and the way she said that, you knew she meant big husky men who didn't care about their clothes and who were used to hard work. Papa was hardly that, with his delicate skin and clean, even fingernails. He was an aristocrat, mama said and she sniffed.

A lot you know, papa said, some of the richest men in the world go in for sports. But of course fishing as a rich man's sport was something he had only heard about. It meant having a boat of your own and a private crew and wearing a captain's uniform. If he could have had that, maybe he would have liked fishing, too. But going out in a rented boat with men like Henry - well, that was different. It was all right for once, just to see what it was like, and now that he knew, once was enough. It was smelly, unpleasant and finally, sickening. But he wouldn't give mama the satisfaction of saying so because

she would only laugh that much more at him. And does the boat go up and down and from side to side, the waves big?

Yes, papa said, there's nothing but water coming from all sides, like that - and he showed them with his hand - till you can hardly stand up, it's awful.

Gee, said Ben, punching one hand against the other, wish I'd been there.

The water, the sky - where they went, where they ended - it was a great big puzzle. Nobody could answer her. She just wondered, but it was a quiet wondering now. She was more used to it now. Here there was water and sand, and in the city there were streets and buildings, and in the country there were fields and rivers and mountains, and yet the same sky was over them all. She supposed the sky was as big as the world, but it was hard to imagine how big. No one seemed to know how big the world was, where it started and where it ended, except mama who said that the world began in the Garden of Eden, and then went on to tell the story of the flood and the rainbow and God's promise. But when Beatrice tried to imagine the garden where the world began, she couldn't get mama to give her the right kind of a picture, so she imagined it to be a garden leading from heaven down a long path, and that was where the world began. And the end, she would ask mama again? And mama looked at her and couldn't understand what she meant and thought that maybe she meant when, and then told her that the world would end when God came down to earth and who knew when that would be? So Beatrice thought, frowning, that the world had not been finished yet, and she wondered how big it would be by the time God did come down.

Addie didn't like the beach; she was always wanting to go home so that she could be with her friends. She was more like papa, hating to get her shoes full of sand and her clothes all spoiled. She preferred staying in the bungalow or sitting on the porch. She would cut out the paper dolls and dresses in the picture books papa brought or string colored beads into chain bracelets

and necklaces or embroider a doily that mama designed with pencil and stretched between wooden hoops. Addie sewed very nicely, making her cross stitches even on both sides, and she liked making French knots and doing the backstitch and scalloping. Mama let her embroider towel borders and napkins and even a tablecloth, though she thought Addie ought to get more exercise and go in the water more often. Beatrice and Ben never tired of the beach. They liked to gather shells and pebbles, dig for worms, lookfor crabs, fly a kite, running. They played lots of games together, though Ben was sometimes rough and Beatrice got hurt, but Ben was so nice that she didn't mind. He would kiss her and call her a good sport and that would makeevrything all right again. She loved Ben; he was so strong and good to her. He would carry her piggy back or be her pony or let her bury him under the sand. They laughed and ran around all day long. And if Ben went off to town, he always brought back something for Beatrice, chewing gum or a lolly pop or Indian nuts or foxy grandpas. It was fun toasting the marshmallow forms, letting them get brown all over till they were creamy inside.

Sometimes company came out to visit. Then Addie was glad and Beatrice and Ben sorry. Mama would be busy in the kitchen and the dining-room all the time. To her, company meant big meals and fancy cakes and all kinds of drinks, but she would always feel tired after they left, especially when there were lots of children. Not that she didn't like the children, but their noise and wild play worried her - someone was bound to be hurt, come in crying and complaining and then papa would get angry and make an unpleasant scene. Addie liked to be with the grown-ups and they liked her because she was such a pretty little lady and quiet as a mouse. Mama's apron string, Ben would mumble, wanting to get out

of doors as soon as possible. Beatrice couldn't help but feel jealous, wondering why the grownups didn't like her as much as they liked Addie. They called her pretty and agreed that she was very talented and treated her to a hug or a cheek-pinch, but Beatrice could tell from their eyes that they looked on Addie with favor. Sometimes she tried to act just like Addie, be quiet and shy and sit still, but their eyes remained the same as before, a little suspicious and not altogether at ease. Then she would jump up and leave, anxious to dismiss them from her mind and lose herself in action.

The rains came and everything got damp and cold. Papa said it was too early, that the weather would clear up and be very beautiful again, that there were still two more weeks of summer before Labor Day came. But the rains continued and at night the lightning and thunder were roof-shaking. Beatrice and Ben enjoyed the crash and downpour; they would run to the window to watch the lightning streak across the water, along the shore. Mama bit her lips, not wanting to appear frightened, because of the children. If they looked at her, she coughed ha, ha, and shook her fist at the sky. They're hammering away up there, making pots and pans! Did you ever hear the like? Hey you, shut up, she would yell defiantly. Addie smiled timidly, her eyes nervous, and she would cling to mama's skirt. But after another week of continued bleakness, mama got peeved and she packed and brought the children home. The city seemed bright and warm, the streets solid and the buildings secure. Mama was relieved; it meant another big job of unpacking, laundering, cleaning and getting settled, but she was ready for it. Here she had her stove, her sink, her closets, her windows - here was home, familiar and comfortable all over again. No more ants, thank God, she exclaimed. And if you want to swim, use the bathtub. She

was tired but with a glad feeling of exhilaration and relief.

For Addie and Ben it meant two more weeks of freedom, two weeks till school began again. They had their friends, their games. Addie enjoyed going to bed late and staying in bed all morning, getting dressed and having nowhere to go, unless it was upstairs to see Pearlie, who was sillier and fatter than ever. Ben got busy collecting immies and winning the prize aggies, glassies and stones. He pitched for the biggest and brightest of them, till his pockets bulged. He had a good eye, a sure aim and hard fingers. He played for tickets, too, matching base ball champs, prize fighters, Indian chiefs, generals and movie cowboys for the new favorites. His profits and losses changed rapidly through a day; sometimes he had two or three packets roughly stacked and tied with rubber bands. Lots of new fads had started that summer and Ben was eager to catch up. Rubber bands accumulated, were twisted into balls - the harder and bigger, the better. Boys spent hours perfecting their balls, winding the rubber bands tightly, a round, smooth surface. False centers were quickly detected and the owners punished. It was unfair to start a ball with a wad of paper or cotton. It had to be rubber through and through. Hands grew expert to feel and bounce. The rubber balls were guarded jealously, proudly.

Beatrice felt cut off, restless. In two weeks she would be in 1 A, have a seat and desk in Miss Peter's class, copy numbers and words from the blackboard, stand up and read by herself from a book. She felt anxious. Miss Peters might find her dumb, give her a D on her report card. She made papa buy her a blackboard and chalk to practice on. She made Addie give her a list of

words to spell. She made Ben teach her numbers. She forced mama to listen to the nursery rhymes. She read her picture story books out loud till she knew every word by heart. She covered every piece of paper she could get hold of with her name, address, class and school. She clutched her pencil hard, trying to imitate Addie's and Ben's small handwriting. She copied the printed letters from the newspapers. She had heard about Geography and History, she remembered the books. They laughed when she asked them to teach her Jogaphly and histry, and she cried, you want me to be dumb and get left back, hating them for know/ing what she didn't. Ben told her she'd be smarter than anybody else in the class, that nobody would know how to write and read and count. That's what you learn in 1 A, he explained. And what else, she asked stubbornly. What else do you expect in the beginning, he laughed. Jogaphy and Histry, she answered, watching him shrewdly. He laughed harder and louder. That comes after, he said, wait till you're in 4A, and he lifted her up and swung her round and round till she was happy again. She was satisfied. She would be the smartest one in the class. She knew Ben wouldn't lie to her, even if he was her brother. She could hardly wait for school to open, to get up and count and spell and read and recite.

To distract her, Ben taught her to play cards. She loved them, especially the Jacks, Queens and Kings. She invented stories about them. She liked the light ones better than the dark ones. She studied them for hours to see if they were the same upside down as downside up. Diamonds, hearts, Clubs, spades. She liked the names of the light ones better, too. She knew what diamonds and hearts were. She didn't know what clubs and spades were. The pictures didn't tell her. She sorted the cards this way and that, matching

then by suites, by numbers. There were fifty-two altogether, and then the Joker. He was a funny fellow. She wanted him to be in the game, but Ben said to wait; he would teach her poker later. You mean Joker, she corrected him. He laughed and showed her how to shuffle the cards, making them ripple between his fingers and come together in one pile. When she tried, the cards just spilled all over the table and floor. He taught her to play casino, helping her to add, to build up her stack. After a while, she loved the good ten, the good two and the four aces best of all. They played for matches and then for toothpicks because mama took all the matches away, saying that was all they needed, to gamble with fire.

Mama and papa played casino, too, but they played for money. When mama lost, papa was very happy, though he usually gave her back the nickel winnings afterwards because she argued them out of him. But if papa lost, mama grabbed the money and squealed with pleasure and of course she never gave him anything back. The children loved to watch them settle up after a game; it was always fun. Sometimes Beatrice and Addie played together, but Beatrice was sure Addie cheated because she always won. Ben wouldn't let Addie cheat; he won more games than she did. Beatrice was glad. She felt revenged. But sometimes they all got into a fight over a game of cards and then mama would come along and tear them up, saying she wished the devil had never invented them. Then Addie would whisper that mama had lost a lot of money playing poker the night before and that was why she was so mad. They knew that was real gambling and felt a kind of awe. They knew papa gambled a lot down-town. Addie said he sometimes lost a million dollars in one night and that was why he came home drunk so late. Mama and papa had a lot of fights about cards.

If you can play and lose God knows how much - I'll see your check book, don't worry - then I guess I can afford to enjoy myself for two or three dollars,

too. Papa would then answer that if she knew how to play he wouldn't mind, but that this way she might just as well give the money away. Why, it's like taking candy from a baby, he would say.

Anyway, there were more and more late card parties; one for women and one for men or one table for poker and another for pinnochle; and it got to be a regular habit. And mama kept saying it was an invention of the devil, but that she played in order to keep her husband home. I'm sure it's a lot cheaper, no matter how we come out, she would say.

Not all of the neighbors joined in the card parties, but there were always enough players to make a game at any time. Some of the neighbors, like the Weavers and the Stones, thought it was terrible. How can people sit and play all the time, Mrs. Weaver asked mama. Mrs. Stone shook her head. She was too busy taking care of her house and family. Imagine women having nothing better to do than to waste their time and money playing cards. As for their husbands, they ought to be glad to spend some time with their families after working all day. I don't want my children to grow up to be gamblers, she said. Mrs. Weaver agreed that children ought to have something better to do at home than to sit around and watch their parents play cards all the time. Mrs. Weaver's oldest son was studying to be a doctor. Mrs. Stone's oldest son was studying to be a lawyer. Two of the Weaver girls and two of the sons worked.

I begged them to go to school, to enter a profession, said Mrs. Weaver, but they wouldn't. They'll be sorry some day. They had their chance. I hope the younger ones will have more sense. She had four younger children: Anna, who played the piano and was in the eighth grade, Alfred who was in the fifth grade, Edna who was in the second grade, and Seymour who was only four years old. She hoped they would all go to college and amount to something, like Tom

who would some day be Dr. Thomas Weaver, M. D.

Mrs. Stone's story was almost the same. Her two older girls worked in an office, though Louise kept on with her education by reading good books and going to concerts. It was Louise who looked after the younger ones: William, who was studying the cello at the age of ten, Helen who was eight and Elsie who was six. She wanted them to be refined, she said.

Our parents may be foreigners, but that doesn't mean they're ignorant and uncultured. When Charles becomes a lawyer he won't have any reason to be ashamed of his family.

It was Mrs. Singer who told mama how the neighbors felt and talked about their playing cards. The way she imitated them showed what she thought of them. Such airs, hm, she would snicker, lifting her eyebrows and turning down the corners of her mouth. Afterwards mama would say, never mind, I intend to give my children just as good an education as any of them, but I don't see what that has to do with my playing cards. Just because I have three children instead of six or nine doesn't mean I haven't done my share of work. All the years I've spent cooking, cleaning, baking, sewing - when did I ever have a minute to myself? And now that my youngest has finally reached school age, I intend to take things easier. Believe me, it doesn't pay - all the work I've done. Why should I sew when I can buy ready made things just as good and cheaper?

Or bake, put in Mrs. Singer, when you can get such lovely bakery bread and rolls and pastry?

Well, said mama, it's all right once in a while, but the taste, you know it isn't the same. Mama was proud of her baking; how could you compare her

bread, her cookies, her cakes and pastries with the bakery's? Shouldn't she know? Why, she used the best cream, butter, eggs. Mrs. Singer didn't answer; she would repeat that remark and gesture elsewhere. But they were agreed on the card-playing and on some of the time-saving modernisms. It's a wonderful country, America, they would chorus, God bless it.

What would my mother have given to have what we have: a private bathroom with a real toilet, an icebox, a gas stove, running water, electric lights, and now even telephones? Who ever heard of a subway in - ? They laughed, picturing the little village each had known, where cattle drove over the narrow dirt roads, pulling wooden carts and lumbering wagons. America, it was the land of inventions. As though it wasn't enough to have a laundry tub with hot and cold running water in which to do the heavy wash, now there were laundry men who picked up and then delivered your bundle all ready to iron, and for a little extra, even ironed! The backbreaks, the heartaches, little by little America did away with them. Schools for the children, clean streets and all kinds of stores - och, it was wonderful, unbelievable.

I'm only sorry I didn't have Alex in the hospital, said Mrs. Singer who had never known what it was like to have her meals served by a nurse and everything taken care of without worry and trouble.

I told you, said mama, that's where I had all of mine, even the first, when I was still a greenhorn and lived downtown; it's the only time a woman can have a real vacation. Mrs. Singer shook her head.

Not every woman's married to a sport like Mr. Berger, believe me. Catch my husband spending an extra nickel on anything! God forgive me for saying so.

Who knows, maybe if he had as much as his brothers, things would be different for me.

Later, when Mrs. Singer went away, Beatrice asked mama how America was different, what her little village in Europe was like. Mama told her, loving this child who was forever asking questions about her faraway, longago childhood. And gradually, as mama talked, the houses and the streets and the stores disappeared, and the trains and the electric lights, and in their place stood a little village surrounded by fields and mountains, with low roofed houses and white washed walls, and dirt floors - not dirty, explained mama, but of earth, nicely swept and painted red - and you got water out of a well with a bucket and for lights you used candles, like those she lit on Friday nights, and everyone made their own furniture and clothing and had to get their own food from the cows and chickens and fields and trees - and mama told how you got the milk from the cow and made the cheese and butter, and how you took the grain to a mill to make into flour for bread, and how you made cloth from sheep's wool, and how the women did their washing by the river, using homemade soap and scrubbing against a rock.

And where did you go to school, asked Beatrice, her eyes full of imagining.

A house like all the others, with benches and tables inside, said mama, and she told how all the classes were in the same room, different children studying different subjects, and how the teacher went around from one to another, helping. It wasn't like American schools, she said, the girls learned to sew and crochet and embroider and make beautiful things out of wood and leather ....

But after a while, after a while of remembering and thinking how nice everything had been then, mama recovered and came back to the present, saying,

yes, it sounds very nice, my little village, but it was a hard life. And once more she rediscovered America, the land of free-flowing honey and money, and she thanked God that she had lived to see the day when she could look back and say, it's over, my children will never know what it was like.

Honey and money, honey and money - Beatrice repeated the words, liking the sound they made, but she couldn't say the words without thinking sticky pennies in jars. And she went off singing, honey and money, honey and money, thank God for America.

And when school opened that Fall, Beatrice had the thrill and excitement she had envied so long, of getting ready the day before by trying on the new shoes and hat and dress and going to the stores to buy school supplies. But she had her disappointments, too, because papa wouldn't get her a schoolbag like Addie's and Ben's or notebooks or a pencil box full of penpoints, erasers, ink wiper, blotter and colored crayons.

Good Lord, what do you want with a schoolbag, a penmanship pad, and so on? Papa got angry, laughed, paid no attention to her.

She's always wanting to be like us, Addie exclaimed, that baby!

I'm not, I'm not, Beatrice protested, I'm in 1 A and just as good as you are. Addie grimaced and showed off her new supplies.

Aw you, muttered Ben, cut it out.

Pa, Ben's being fresh, called Addie. Papa shook Ben by the shoulder. Ben's arms went up, his head averted.

Well, why doesn't she leave the kid alone? They walked back to the house, Addie's arm around papa's, Beatrice's hand clutching Ben's. Wait till tomorrow, said Ben, you'll see, Miss Peters will tell you what to buy.

But what if everybody else has things, insisted Beatrice.

Don't worry, they won't. In 1 A the teacher tells you to get special things. She walked on beside him, not altogether comforted. You be a good girl, he whispered and don't tell nobody and I'll give you one of my books and pencils, how's that?

Oh Ben!

Ssh. The secret made her happy. Now let Addie show off all she liked. Ben would give her a new pencil and a new notebook. And I'll even let you carry my school bag tomorrow, Ben added as he followed her into the house. Sh.

Breakfast next morning was almost solemn. Mama had gotten them up early to make sure they got off on time. Addie would have stayed in the bathroom for ever, since she got there first and knew it, but papa made her hurry out by raising his voice. They sat around the table very stiff and quiet, as though they were already in school. Ben squirmed; he didn't like his new white shirt with the big collar close to his ears; he didn't like his shiny black shoes which squeaked whenever he moved his toes. He felt like a sissy, with his hair brushed and flattened against his head. Beatrice glanced sideways at him all through the meal. Her face was flushed, the way it usually got at night because of the electric lights, and she felt like giggling. Mama acted nervous, too; she wasn't used to such silence, while papa pretended there was nothing different this morning from any other. But before breakfast was over, he gave them all a lecture on how to behave in their new classes, how to sit and how to stand and how to answer when spoken to, and generally, advised them to keep their reputations as the good, smart Berger children. Then he gave each of them a new minted dime, told them to have a good time. But don't buy any junk with

it just because you can get a lot for a penny; buy a good bar of Hershey chocolate or an ice cream cone or something like that, and not till after lunch, remember. He was just as nervous as they were, maybe more, and at the last minute decided to take them to school himself. He wanted to be sure that Miss Peters remembered him and knew that Beatrice was his daughter. Then she would be sure what to expect. Mr. Lansing had told him more than once that it was a pleasure to find parents who took such personal interest and intelligent pride in their children's schooling, that if all parents were to cooperate the way he did, the school could get along without a principal. Papa blew his nose, straightened his shoulders and belly forward, led his trio off. Mama went into Mrs. Beaver's apartment to watch them leave; she waved goodbye from the front-room window above the street, smiling anxiously.

Beatrice wasn't sure she liked having papa along. The children might laugh at papa's belly and she would be embarrassed. But in the end, she felt some of papa's pride: to be known as one of the good, smart Berger children was not a little thing. She skipped alongside him, slipped her hand trustingly in his, and raising her head brightly, increased the length of her steps to keep up with him.

Miss Peters was a frowsy haired lady, very plain to look at in her brown sweater, long skirt and flat shoes. But she looked kind and had a quiet voice and Beatrice decided she liked having the front seat in the middle row near the teacher's desk. She was the third in line, had the third clothes hook wardrobe closet at the back of the room, was the monitor for row three. They practiced lining up, taking their seats, going to and from the closet, until every one was sure where they belonged. It was very orderly and Miss Peters was pleased. She said they were a very nice class of boys and girls and told them to sit straight with their hands folded on top of the desk. Then

she called their names out of a book, telling them to answer here and to raise one hand high. There was a lot of giggling because some of the children had funny names and sometimes they forgot to raise their hands. Beatrice waited happily, wanting to get started on her first day at school. She wondered what Addie and Ben were doing in their classes. She kept looking around the room for signs of what it meant to be in 1 A but all she saw were other children like herself who were waiting and wondering and looking around. When Miss Peters finished calling their names, she read them a story. It was a nice story, about a prince who had a black horse. Beatrice was sorry when it ended; she wished she could see the book and look at the pictures. She wished Miss Peters would let her read the story over again. Then there was singing. They sang a few of the songs they had learned in kindergarten, only Miss Peters didn't sing with them; she just waved her hands to keep time. There was no piano in the room and the songs didn't sound the same. After singing, they had recess. They went to the yard just as they did last term; the boys and girls separated to go to the toilets and when they came back, they played games. Beatrice wondered why the 1 A lessons didn't begin. After a while they went back to their room and Miss Peters gave them each a piece of black crayon and a sheet of gray paper and told them to draw a picture. Beatrice tried hard to make a milk wagon on her street butit didn't turn out very good. She wished she could draw a picture of the prince and the black horse but she didn't know how to. Afterwards, Miss Peters picked out the best drawings and hung them over the blackboard. There was a picture of the school with the flag waving on top, another of the sliding ponds and swings in the park across the way, one of a cat chasing a mouse and some of houses in the country with trees and

paths and flowers on the ground. Next, Miss Peters gave them sharp, new pencils and lined sheets of paper and told them to fold the papers the way she did, in four columns. It was a lesson in copying numbers from the board and filling all the spaces on both sides of the paper. Then the bell rang and it was time to go to lunch. Beatrice frowned; it had been a very easy morning. She couldn't understand. She felt tired, sleepy.

She met Addie and Ben in the yard. Ben looked the same and he was already eating. He chewed and grinned at her, moving over to make room for her on the bench next to him. But Addie was all excited. She told how Miss Carey, the pretty Mildred, had picked her out to be the class president because she was the only one who hadn't raised her hand when Miss Carey asked who would like to be class president.

I was sitting in the very last seat way back of the room and I wa s sure she wouldn't see me anyway - God, was I scared! Addie's eyes were like black coals and she kept twisting her lips with the knuckles of her hand. I don't know what I have to do. Imagine, class president! Beatrice stared at her, fascinated. To do anything for Miss Carey, to be able to hold her hat and coat or carry her books - what could be more wonderful? Class president, it sounded so mysterious and beautiful, like being next to God. For once, Addie forgot to show off and Beatrice didn't feel jealous; it was too exciting, real. The yard was noisy with children running all around and yelling, but since mama had made them promise to stick together they went to the candy store at the corner to spend their new dimes. Addie chatted merrily and Beatrice just listened, having nothing to say. Ben kept to himself, satisfied with chewing gustily on his big stick of taffy.

The afternoon passed .ike the morning. 1A practiced lining up, taking seats, going to the closet, sitting with hands folded. Then Miss Peters called the role,again told them to raise their hands and answer here. Later, they recited. Beatrice recited Little Miss Muffet, Jack Corner and Mistress Mary. Miss Peters praised her for coming to the front of the room, speaking slowly and clearly, and acting the poems out so nicely. The children clapped their hands. Then they sang the alphabet song and Miss Peters pointed out the letters on charts hanging on the wall above the blackboard. They played an alphabet game; whoever could point to the right letter on the chart became the teacher and got the pointer. Afterwards, they went to recess and played some more games. When they came back, they were given their sharpened pencils and another sheet of lined paper. This time they copied letters between the spaces. Beatrice tried to keep her column straight. When she finished writing on both sides of her paper, Miss Peters gave her another sheet and told her to make her letters bigger. At three o'clock the bell rang and the first day was over.

Addie and Ben had full school-bags; their new textbooks bulged. While she only had her drawing and two starred papers covered with numbers and letters. Ben told her that's swell and Addie said my how nice and she felt better. About a block away, she tripped. She cried when she saw the hole in her stocking and the bruise on her knee, but Ben said, aw that's nothing, it's just the first time, because he was always tearing holes in his stockings and in his pants, too.

By the time she got home, some of the excitement she had felt for the day returned. The streets were lively with children coming home from school. They seemed very happy to be free again: three o'clock had a special meaning.

a newness once more. Boys swung their books from leather straps, girls walked along looking at their new readers. They called to one another, asked and answered questions about school,whistled, laughed and shouted. It was nice being a part of all that; Beatrice clutched her papers, looked about curiously, smiled. She went to school, too. She was only in 1A, but at least she had started, so now no one could say she didn't know anything about it. That was some satisfaction, though she didn't feel much of it inside, but she pretended to be as happy as everyone else, even if they were all just showing off. She noticed the boys didn't, Ben didn't. She wished she were a boy. Boys were honest.

But it was fun getting up in the morning with Addie and Ben and having to hurry to school and eating lunch in the yard or in the park and coming back at three o'clock and talking school with Addie and having free time to play on the street till supper and then doing homework in the evening. And when she got AAA on her first report card she was just as proud and pleased as Addie and could hardly wait to show it to papa, knowing he would give her a special present for being so good and smart. Addie looked at her card with an uppity look, saying, how can you compare your card with mine? Why, 1A's as easy as baby pie! To which Beatrice quickly and angrily replied, 1A's just as hard for me as 7A's for you, so there. And no matter what Addie said, she repeated, they're just the same, my AAA and your AAA. Ben had ABC for his work, effort and conduct, and was worried in a funny sort of way about going home: he grinned, frowned, shrugged his shoulders, stopped to take a loose tooth out of his mouth, cleaned it and put it in his pocket, told Addie to shut up or he'd punch

her good and hard if she kept on talking about his report card, then let Beatrice keep his tooth till they got home, and walked back on the other side of the street by himself.

Weekends came with Pearl White in a western serial, with trips to the library for colored books of fairy tales, with excursions along the boulevard for window shopping, with train rides to Brooklyn to visit relatives, with all kinds of holiday gayety. And because there was a war going on, they bought liberty bonds and savings stamps and saw a few men in soldiers' uniforms. Papa kept very busy; he was always going to the Club on account of politics. He and mama had a lot of fights about that. Mama said she didn't see why he had to get mixed up in politics.

Who else do you know, she demanded, name one other man who leaves his family day after day to bother with political meetings, show me just one. Papa grunted in disgust. Hrrup, she mimicked, sure. Why don't the neighbors, Singer, Weaver, Fuller, Stone, Goodman, Hill, Hartman, name anyone you like, mix in politics? Only you, Max Berger, big-shot.

A lot you know, papa would answer. You mind the children and take care of the house and leave me attend to my business. I earn a living, don't I? What more do you want? Herman Singer! His voice dropped and he made a face of contempt. How would you like being married to him, eh? Call him a man, that wretched little worm? Why, he's afraid of his own shadow. Even when he talks, he looks around, frightened by his own voice.

And you, mama said, somewhat subdued.

Never mind me, you'll see, he finished curtly. And when, later in the

Fall, he came home and announced that he had been elected on the Democratic ticket to be Bronx comptroller of the treasury, mama saw. For a day or two she acted embarrassed, smiled a lot and remained silent in his presence. But since it didn't change her life one bit, she gradually became herself once more. She couldn't see what the good of it was.

Comptroller of the treasury - what's that, who cares? Either you're busy running downtown having dates with the boys or you're busy with the Club. Just so you're away from the house. What am I, a housekeeper?

Papa tried to show her what it meant, that he, a foreign born citizen of the country, had been able to achieve public office, that his patriotic services had been honored and recognized by election to a responsible positions; he tried to make her understand that he had become a full fledged American, that he had attained an important membership in the Democratic Party, that he was now a real Tammany man and as such would be entitled to all kinds of privileges and public advantages. My God, Caroline, how can you be so dumb, so old fashioned, so far behind the times? It was hopeless. He looked at her bitterly, wondering why he was married to a woman who wanted to chain him and keep him from advancing himself. His ambition was hurt, his vanity outraged. Bitterly, he told her about some of the other women he had met, wives of politicians, who tried to help their husbands succeed, how they attended big dinner parties, how they dressed and talked and accompanied their husbands.

So, mama exclaimed, catching him at last, they take their wives along and you leave me home! Well, that's just dandy! That's just jimdandy! Her voice rose with her color. It was bad enough before, being neglected and left at home while he went careening around with the boys to political meetings and

poker parties, with wine, women and song at the end, and late suppers. But, there were women and women! Now that she knew respectable wives also joined in the fun, the situation took on an entirely different complexion. Wasn't she his wife? Well, was he so ashamed of her that he couldn't introduce her socially? The personal insult was too much - she broke down and wept.

Papa watched her for a minute, sucked in his lips, grew pale, tried to whistle, then began walking up and down the room to collect himself. His bitterness had vanished, giving way to self-reproach. He wished he had bitten his tongue. Why hurt the poor girl? She might be a simpleton and something of a fool in some ways, but good Lord, she did the best she could. There wasn't a better woman in the world when it came to downright goodness and decency of heart. The way she took care of the house and kids, looked after his comforts, managed her pocketbook - hell, she was a prize. And still a very fine looking woman, damn it all. Under other circumstances, on looks alone, Ziegfield would have had another Billy Dove. She'd been the prettiest girl of them all back in the old days. He didn't count his luck nearly enough. She wasn't a spendthrift, she didn't gad about all day long like lots he knew, she had a pretty nice temper for a woman - what more did he want? So she wasn't an up-to-date sort to mix socially, so she wasn't an educated modern American woman - what of it? It was too late to do anything about that anyway. It wasn't her fault, was it? He felt too guilty to bluff his way out this time. This was no crying act like those she pulled on every least occasion. Money and presents wouldn't help this time.

For God's sake, stop that crying, he began irritably, waving his handkerchief before her. You didn't even give me a chance to finish what I was saying! You know how long I've been trying to break into this politics business, to

get acquainted with the big shots. You'd think I went to their dinner parties every night, to see you take on. I went twice, three times. I was invited. How could I take you along, silly fool?

Mama waved him away, too full of her grief to care what he was saying, but the crying diminished in volume and took on a listening tone, wanting to be comforted and reassured. Papa waited a while, walking about angrily to attract attention to himself. Occasionally, he muttered half-aloud. Mama said nothing, giving the impression of thinking over her lot and making a plan.

Women! Why do you make yourselves so unreasonable? It's enough to make a man sick. I don't know why I put up with it. I ought to pack my things and beat it to hell out of here, even if I land in the gutter down at the Bowery. I suppose you'd like that better, eh? He resumed his bitterness, holding himself up as a picture of a man who worked and triumphed everywhere except in his own home, like the prophet without honor and glory in his own country. Mama said nothing, knowing that his words had nothing to do with the case. There was only one thing he could say that would matter and that was about taking her along as his wife into the company of other wives. Finally, he did, not so much as a promise but as a thing understood. This time it was mama who got up and left, saying, never mind, I'll see.

So the very next time papa said he wasn't coming home for dinner, mama took action. She waited till the children got home from school, got dressed up, told Addie to look after Ben and not to open the door to anyone else, took Beatrice and went downtown. On the way down, she coached Beatrice what to say and what to see and how to get papa to come home. Beatrice squeezed mama's hand, her eyes brightly serious. She felt flattered, important. She knew

mama had picked her to go along because she was not afraid of the responsibility. She would know how to talk to papa properly.

It was a long ride on the subway, the first she had ever taken at night, but she did not feel tired or sick. It seemed like another day, a time and event apart from the one that had started with school that morning as usual. She felt tense with excitement, aware of the strange moving world of faces and people that came and went along the station route. Mama tried to make her feel that it was a holiday. They were dressed in their best, each carrying a new pocketbook, hers small and red, mama's large and black. At last they got off the train, mama peering anxiously at the station name several times to be sure it was Delancey Street. Clutching Beatrice's hand, she followed the platform to the stairway, mounted, went through the turnstile to another stairway, and came up into the dim lighted street. She had a card in her bag which she showed to the corner newsstand dealer. He pointed this way and that, pleased to help strangers in that part of the city, and told her to ask a policeman if she lost her way. Mama smiled and thanked him, then hurried off with Beatrice, mumbling about anyone liking to come to this part of town as often as papa did.

It was a foreign little world to Beatrice, the streets narrow and dark and full of pushcarts and dirty looking houses. Along curbs, children were playing with wood over an open fire. There were not many people in sight, though voices drifted down to the streetthrough lighted windows, some broken, others boarded by poster signs. Twice, mama stopped to ask for directions.

The house to which they were finally directed was like many others, the entrance high above an iron railed staircase, the windows pasted with posters

and large advertising boards, the dim interior carrying voices outside. Mama went up to the landing to verify the number on the door transom, took out her card again, then, satisfied that she was at the right place, told Beatrice to go in and ask for Mr. Max Berger. She would be waiting outside, she said, and she reminded Beatrice how to act, what to say, and to look around. Beatrice walked calmly into the first room on her left. It was open, full of men seated around table, playing cards and smoking. Most of the men sat in shirt sleeves. A few bottles of beer stood on table corners. She stopped inside the room to look for papa. A man caught her eye and called out smiling, who are you looking for, little girl? She answered clearly, politely. Did you see Berger here tonight, he called to a man at another table. The answer was a jerk of the thumb. Beatrice walked into the adjoining room which was somewhat smaller. She saw papa immediately and went and stood next to him. He didn't see her right away; his hand was raised in the act of bringing a card down to the table; he paused, looked up at the ceiling to consider, then brought his hand down decisively. It was a triumphant play; he chuckled. Then Beatrice tugged his elbow.

Hello, papa, she said and then to the others, good evening. Before papa could speak to her, the men at the table were asking her questions. It gave papa time to recover from his surprise. He patted her face and spoke quietly to her. Mama's waiting outside, she told him.

All right, he nodded, I'll be right out. But she decided to wait until he had settled his pinnochle account. There was a lot of money on his side of the table; it looked like he had won all of it. The men waved goodnight to him, telling him to have a good time.

A nice kid you've got there, one of them called. Papa shook his head and winked at her. As they passed between tables, someone else called out.

Leaving kind of early tonight, aren't you?

Yep, the missus came down with my baby for a blow out. And papa laughed, looking pleased.

Take'em to Perlman's for dinner, that's a nice quiet family place. There's a good show at the Fulton Square, too. Friendly suggestions flew across the room. Beatrice thought he was very popular; everybody seemed to know him.

Oh, I guess we'll manage to find a nice evening's entertainment, papa replied. Beatrice smiled and waved goodbye from the door.

Mama looked strangely lonesome below; she seemed nervous when she saw papa coming down the stairs with Beatrice.

Hello, Katie, what's the big idea, he said, but he didn't seem at all annoyed, maybe because he liked finding her there all dressed up and waiting for him. He kissed her and eyed her admiringly, with something of curiosity in his look.

Just wanted to check up on you, she answered lightly, pretending to be gay. Papa snorted, a wry smile twisting his lips.

Well, it's about time.

Mama sniffed. If other women can do it, I guess I can, too.

Atta girl, where to?

For a minute, mama's face hesitated; it was on her tongue to say, look, Max, I've got a nice meal ready for you at home, and besides, I left Addie and Bea all alone, but she knew that would be the wrong thing to say after taking all the trouble to get dressed up and calling him away from his game, so instead

she said, why ask me, you're the boss!

O. K., chuckled papa. He walked to the curb and whistled towards the corner. Mama's lips tightened.

Why a taxi, she asked playfully, where are we going?

I thought you said I was the boss.

Mama got in and Beatrice sat in the middle. Well, if you must spend money, I suppose it might as well be on your own family. Papa's smile soured; he wished she wouldn't spoil his good humor. It would be nice if she surprised him more often, just for the hell of it. Gradually, the surprise gave way to suspicion. Bringing the kid along to spy on him! As though Katie could think of having a good time just for the sake of some fun. She made the buffaloes groan on every nickel. Well, she wasn't going to spoil his evening. Funny, how women were. He knew damn well she couldn't enjoy a cabaret, and yet she couldn't bear to think of him enjoying it either. Then what was she after? To get him to stay home with her where she was happy? He tapped on the glass and told the driver to make it Perlman's.

That was the nice quiet family place, Beatrice remembered. She looked at mama and smiled, squeezing her hand.

Poor baby, you should be going to bed, mama said, leaning down to kiss her.

Now mama, you know I'm not sleepy, Beatrice protested. She put her arm through papa's to establish their en rapport. Are you sure you want to take us to Perlman's, she said softly. What do you mean, he asked.

Maybe there's a better place, she suggested.

Sure there's a better place, lots of them - Monte Carlo, for instance.

Papa laughed.

Well, then let's go there, she prompted.

I'm afraid it's a little too far for your mother, too far and too steep, he said purposely.

But not for me, cried Beatrice. Mama stiffened.

Pretty big ideas you've got for a little girl. But Perlman's not so bad, good eats and wine and music. I guess you'll like it. Beatrice wished mama would join the fun.

Perlman's was a restaurant below the street. It was not exactly a cellar andyet you went downstairs to enter it. There was a man in uniform outside, who tipped his hat and held the door open for them. Papa said, hello Al, I've brought my wife and daughter - anyone here? It's all right, Mr. Berger, just the regulars, come right in. The room was large and bright. All the tables were covered with white cloths, spread with silver, glasses, bread trays, plates, funny bottles. Beatrice saw a piano near the window and hoped they would sit next to it, but papa stood waiting till the waiter saw him and came up to greet him. Then Mr. Perlman appeared and was introduced to mama and Beatrice and he gave them a very friendly welcome and said he hoped they would enjoy themselves there. He invited them to sit at his table and said, just make yourselves at home, anything you want, it's on the house. Mama was very impressed though papa just smiled and waved his hand as much as to say it was all right, he could take care of his family.

They sat down at a table against the wall about half-way from the piano and Mr. Perlman took the order himself, telling papa what the day's specialties were. Papa talked about wines and said, I'll leave it to you, you know what I

like, white, red and brandy afterwards. Mr. Perlman smiled and went off to the kitchen to supervise the order. In a little while he returned with a bottle of cognac, for an appetizer, he said, and sat down to drink a toast with them.

More and more people arrived and then the musicians. Two fat painted women passed their table, laughing, and one of them looked at papa sideways as though she knew him, but he went on talking with Mr. Perlman without stopping. Later, it turned out that they were singers and the one who had looked at papa came up and asked mama if she would like a special song. Mama said no, anything would do, but papa reached into his pocket and gave her a dollar bill, saying, you girls pick a favorite. The woman thanked mama and patted Beatrice's hair, saying she had a little girl the same age. Then she walked around to the other tables, swinging her fat hips and making her bracelets jingle. Beatrice kept watching her and looking at mama's amused and annoyed expression. Both the singers wore fancy, low-cut dresses which showed their fat arms and bare backs. The blonde one who stayed near the piano had on green shoes and a green chiffon dress with a big bunch of flowers stuck on one side of her stomach. The dark one was dressed in black net with lots of jewelry all over. Together, they looked like actresses who had gotten old and forgotten to change their clothes. They sang loud and forcefully, one high and one low, and everybody clapped for more and more songs.

It was a long meal, full of different dishes. No sooner were they finished with one course when the waiter set down another. Mr. Perlman came over every once in a while to ask mama how she liked the food. She praised everything highly, assuring him she couldn't do better herself. They had soup and fish and pickles and olives and celery and radishes and all kinds of rolls and meat

balls inside of cabbage leaves and stuffed chicken and a platter full of broiled meats and cooked vegetables and finally ices and cookies and demi-tasse. And there was wine all the way through, about five different bottles which papa opened on the floor between his legs, one after the other, though there was still wine left in the bottle before. Mama tried not to say anything, but Beatrice could see she was worried and didn't approve of papa's extravagance at all. Every time the waiter came up to the table, she would say, what, some more! And then she would tell papa she couldn't eat or drink another thing, she was so full. But papa just cleared his throat, rubbed his hands together, and told the waiter to go ahead, next.

Everything was very good but even Beatrice had to stop; she felt herself getting sleepy. She was glad when papa called for the bill because it meant they were leaving. Mama bit her lips, horrified to see all the bills papa counted out on the waiter's tray. And when papa asked her, after saying goodnight to Mr. Perlman, where she would like to go next, she answered very definitely, home, where do you think? And then she complained when he whistled for a taxi across the street. Max, you're crazy - why, it'll cost a fortune to go all the way uptown from here. What made things worse was her sudden realization that the taxi was the same that had brought them to the restaurant.

What's this, a private chauffeur with a taxi just for you, she exclaimed angrily.

That's right, papa answered, getting in first, do you want to come along or not? Beatrice could hardly keep her eyes and ears opened. She sat between

them, letting their words drown her in a flood of sleep. She heard mama talk about the subway, about the meal she had prepared at home, about the way he threw his money away, about his singer friends, about a respectable business man who had a wife and three children and a home - and then papa's voice hiccuping a quiet, ah why don't you shut up, Katie - and then she was at the bottom where everything was quiet and dark.

Mama made it clear: the Berger household was not like other households. To Beatrice that meant having a different name, a different door to enter in. She knew them all: the Singers, the Weavers, the Hartmans, the Silvers, the Fullers, the Stones, the Rankins, the family neighbors in her own house and in those on either side. She had many friends among their children: Birdie and Florence, Paul, Carl and Victor, Peter, Elsie, Tom. They had different fathers and mothers and lived in different apartments. And there were many other children, many more families, among whom Addie and Ben had their friends. But it seemed that was not what mama meant. Gradually, what she meant became clear, that the Berger household was not like other households because of papa. Papa was different from all other papas and husbands not because his name was different and he had a different door key, but because he himself was different from all the rest. Now Beatrice had always known this about papa, but in a very special way. She had always thought papa was smarter, richer and somehow better than the other papas; she would have said superior if she had been sure that it meant what she meant about papa. She thought so for many reasons: because of the way the policeman Pat tipped his hat and talked to papa; because of the way everybody came to papa for help and advice; because of the way papa walked and talked and dressed; and, generally, because papa gave you the

same feeling you thought he had about himself. Of course she knew about his staying out late and coming home drunk and she knew he gambled a lot and she knew he didn't spend much of his time in the house and that he never played with his children and lots of other things like that, but since it was papa who did and didn't do those things, Beatrice thought that was the way things had to be, the way they were. Not that she didn't sometimes wish and want them to be different. Papa taking her for a walk early on Sunday morning was much nicer and realer than papa talking to himself in the dark hall outside her bedroom in the middle of the night. But she supposed both actions belonged together since it was papa who did them. And if he gambled and stayed away from the house, she believed that must belong with his being rich and being smart since he was rich and smart. How else? Papa was so many people in one: pupa and Max and Mr. Berger and Grandma Theresa's son and Uncle Benjamin's step brother and Jimmy Martel's boyhood friend and the manager of a big bakery company and a Tammany man, and who knew what more. Of course he wasn't like Mr. Singer or Mr. Weaver! Beatrice thought it was something to be proud of. Mama said big shot and show off but Beatrice noticed how popular papa was, how everybody looked up to him for being so sporty with his money and acting so highbrow. It wasn't that papa was unfriendly, but that he kept to himself even when he was in company. He ate, drank, chatted, played cards and visited with other people, but always with an air of difference that made you see him apart from them: in the way he crossed one leg high over the other, his silk sock showing beneath the carefully creased and expensive looking trouser; in the way he held a glass with his little finger extended stiffly because it had once been broken and set

that way; in the way he sat back and studied his fingertips joined tentwise, or, arms folded, looked thoughtful, indifferent, amused; in the way his pale eyes looked through you or above you, seeing something else besides just you. It was hard to know just what it was that made papa different, though Beatrice never tired of watching him and looking around to see how other people watched him, too. They seemed to respect him rather than like him, but Beatrice thought it was much better that way since that was the way papa wanted it to be. Then, too, although everybody came to papa for help, to talk over their troubles and to ask his business advice, or just to tell him about themselves - papa never did that himself. He didn't seem to need anyone's help. If he had any problems, he kept them to himself and solved them by himself. Others could tell him about their private affairs, talk to him about their business - he listened, spoke, gave his opinion - but he remained silent about his own. How often he stopped mama in the middle of her gossiping - why don't you mind your own business, he would say in annoyance. MYOB - it was a familiar retort on the street, but Beatrice knew papa meant something different by it. When she and Addie and Ben got into some kind of a fight, papa separated them angrily, thundering words about self-respect, keeping apart, playing alone if they couldn't find their equals.

Mama looked on enviously - would to God she had his gift of gab, his heartless quality of making himself clear to other people! Her resentment burned inside, twisting its way darkly down. There was no satisfying outlet, no free passage way into the light. She grumbled, she wept, she occupied her unhappiness in the kitchen and with the children, lines etching her mouth and shadowing her eyes. She could only feel - helpless, peasant emotions. She called him an aristocrat, with bitterness on her tongue. And slowly, mama's meaning grew

clear. It was a serious awakening for Beatrice, knowledge rooting its sense of good and evil within her. Papa's differences were not just differences because papa was papa and so, different from other men. No. That much was true, but not all of the truth. Accepting papa was one thing; taking all papa's different selves for granted as belonging to him and therefore right, was another thing. And it was this other thing that mama meant that began to become clear. Mama didn't accept all of papa's different selves at all; she didn't take them for granted. But most of all, and this was the main thing, mama didn't think papa was right. What he did and didn't had to do with being good and bad. Other people might look up to him because he was so clever and so aloof, respect him even if they didn't like him, but mama had her own opinion about him. You, she would cry, with your airs, your silk shirts and stuffed pockets! What good is it? You've got a heart harder than this wood - she beat the side of the table, her voice like a groaning saw against it. A heart like ice, not blood and tears! When anybody comes to you, they shiver and freeze! Clever, who cares? You're cold and inhuman! Why did you ever get married, if you wanted to remain a bachelor in your habits? A man who has no time for his wife and his children and his home, has no right getting married! All you care about is cards and good times and pleasing your belly! My God, the money you pour into yourself - cognac and wines and brandies and enough food for ten men twice your size!

It went on and on, hours, days, week after week. If he was dressed, he moved about swiftly, put what he needed in his pockets and left the house, hurling a go-to-hell or God-damn-it-woman-will-you-leave-me-alone curse at her head, wishing a bolt of lightning would strike her dumb once and for all, and

then slammed the door shut. Sometimes, he remained away two days, returning only to change his clothes or get something he had forgotten. Then mama would sit around, not see any of the neighbors, and let herself slip into apathy, not caring what she wore or how she looked. It would frighten Beatrice to see mama, her face almost yellow, her eyes dull and staring as though to cloud her pain, her breath uneven and full of desolate sighs, her body stooped and tired, old. And if an innocent prank or childish prattle was unable to draw mama from her grief, if going to another room to play quietly had no effect on mama, then Beatrice would try to crawl inside mama's grief, to come close, to give and find some loving comfort in the sharing. What's the matter, mama, she would ask tenderly, why are you so sad? And it was the echo in her child's voice of her own helplessness, that roused the buried tears and channeled anew the dark stream of feelings into words. And soon the first faint ripple became a torrent rushing blindly and headlessly into the open light, seeking deliverance. Out of the agonized stream of mama's escaping despair came the new knowledge, the complex whole of truth with its many contradictory facets, a burning, changing prism. And mama's meaning became clear as the river of her heart moved into a sunlit sea. And this was it:

Papa was evil; he hurt mama. Papa was mean, hateful, cruel. He made mama suffer and cry. Papa was selfish; he only thought about himself. He didn't care about making mama happy, only about having a good time for himself. Papa did many wrong things; he sinned against mama. He had separated mama from Grandma Stella, separated her from her family, separated her from her friends. Many times when mama was sick, he had left her alone, left her alone with little babies while he stayed away. He enjoyed himself with strange women, gave them

money, bought their clothes, even jewels. Like the two singers, the fat old actresses in the restaurant downtown. Papa was a cheat and a liar; he made believe he was everybody's friend, but he really wasn't. He gave them money and advice like a rich man would throw a bone to a dog or a nickel to a beggar. To papa people were like dogs and beggars. He helped them, not because he cared about them or pitied them, but because he liked to feel above them, stronger and more powerful. He wanted to be the master, the boss, the big chief. And everybody else the slaves, who would honor and obey him. It was because he fooled people that he got away with that idea. He was really much less than he imagined and made people believe. He was covered with fat, not muscle; he was weak, not strong. With his milk white skin and dainty fingernails, his fancy clothes and appetite, he was more like a sick woman than like a healthy man. A truckdriver would put him to shame. He couldn't do a hard day's work, if he tried. And he tried to be a dictator, to rule the world! A mouse trying to be a lion! A rooster trying to be a king! Each taking turns bellowing and strutting!

Till mama blushed, suddenly scandalized to have Beatrice think these things about her father. And immediately afterward, mama began to defend him, to make excuses for papa. Naturally, everyone had his faults, but nobody could deny what a wonderful man papa was - so clever, so ambitious, so anxious to make something for his family. What other father spent so much time over his children's education? Didn't he buy them the best of clothes, see that they had plenty of good food to eat, give them spending money for movies and toys and whatever else they wanted? What other family in their circumstances had a piano and a violin and a victrola and a telephone, such a beautiful home, vacations in the country, credit with all the storekeepers and everything?

I was angry, mama said, don't believe anything I said. You know how it is when a person gets mad. I didn't mean to make papa out to be a bad man. You know he loves us. He's just got his own ways, his own ideas..... Mama halted, worried. The child was young but so strangely wise - it was hard to know how much she would remember and whether she was hiding her new, sad secrets behind this changed, smiling mask. She clasped the child ardently to her, awed and humbled by the bond pulling them tighter and closer together.

With new eyes, Beatrice began to look at the households of their neighbors, to discover wherein lay the differences between hers and theirs. Mama made it clear that the Berger household was not all that it should be. Then what was it made the others better? She looked and couldn't find it. The Weaver family was larger, but what of it? She had often heard mama say what a shame it was that the two older girls were old-maids and had to work for their living like men. Mrs. Weaver herself complained that the girls could not find husbands. What was so good about that? And then Henry was such an ugly one. What would she want with an older brother like him? And Eddie, who was tall and skinny, and stuttered and blinked and had a chicken's neck which he kept stretching and twisting, was only interested in being a skirt-chaser, his mother said, and would come to no good. Of course it was nice to have a doctor in the family like Tom but then so would Ben be a doctor when he grew up, so that made it even. As for the others, Anna played the piano and so did Addie, Alfred went to school just like Ben (though he wasn't nearly so nice a brother as Ben because he never played with Edna) and then Edna was like her, about the same age, and there was Seymour who was still a little boy and not quite ready for kindergarten. Mr. Weaver was a tall, quiet man, rather skinny like Eddie,

with a moustache. He came and went quietly, always sad-looking; he worked hard as a furrier, mama said. He smoked cigarettes and read a lot of newspapers, when he was home. Was he a better man than papa, she wondered. Edna didn't seem to understand her questions: did her father play games with her, did she sit on his lap, did he tell her bed-time stories? Edna didn't seem to care to talk about her father. She was a skinny, nervous girl; she hardly ever laughed. Beatrice decided she was glad not to be Edna, glad not to be in her place. Mrs. Weaver was too old and too fat to be called mama. Not that she wasn't very nice and friendly; she always gave the children cookies or fruit or something when they played in her house, just like mama did. But after all, mama was so much prettier. Mama could tell such wonderful stories, laugh and sing and jump around. And mama had so much more time to go out shopping or visiting and to do things. Mrs. Weaver never cut out dolls or made baby dresses or sat down to show the children how to play with their toy dishes and toy houses or how to play doctor and nurse, teacher and school, gypsies or society.

The Singer house was no better. Mr. Singer was stingy, Mrs. Singer got mad quickly and was strict, Florence was a pale and scary child, Birdie was too stupid to be anything but a copy-cat and had funny chinky eyes besides, while the two boys were nothing but babies. It was Mrs. Singer who wore the pants in that family; she was the boss. She was always yelling or slapping one of the children. She had no patience with them. If they wanted anything, they had to ask for it quickly and without whining, otherwise her frown deepened and she pushed them away. Mr. Singer was even worse; he was only a little man but he had a terrible temper, though he never showed it to anyone else but his children. He was afraid of his wife because she could open her mouth louder and meaner

than he could. Besides, she was forever reminding him what a poor business man he was, compared to his richer brothers. She made a lot of fun of him, saying he was like his brothers only in two ways, that he looked like them and kept a cigar in his mouth. They were the only things he managed to keep in spite of his wife. Beatrice always felt a little sorry for him; at the same time she was glad he wasn't her father. She couldn't see what there was in the Singer family to be jealous of. They didn't have anything, so far as she was concerned. She tried to imagine papa married to Mrs. Singer, mama married to Mr. Singer, but it didn't come out any better whichever way she changed the families around, so she decided to leave them as they were, and be glad she was Beatrice Berger.

And so it went with the other families. Wherever she looked and compared, she found a lot of things that were missing or worse than they were in her own family. The Stones were a nice family but rather stuck-up; Charles who was studying to be a lawyer was very good-looking, especially when he smiled, but he hardly ever smiled to anyone. Once when he was coming along the street with a friend of his from law school, Beatrice noticed what lovely dimples and teeth he had and wondered why he wasn't friendly like that to everyone. The two older girls tried to keep the younger children from playing with the neighbors. Elsie was never allowed to visit anyone unless Mrs. Stone happened to be talking to one of the neighbors and then she couldn't very well refuse to give Elsie permission to play with the children already there. Helen and William were the same age as Addie and Ben but everyone knew Helen was expected to go to college and that William was studying cello for a big orchestra. Louise and Beulah looked down at the neighborhood. They said it was a cheap and common neighborhood, and that they were only living there until they could afford to move to a better part of the city.

Not that Louise or Beulah were impolite to anyone, but they had high standards. So even Mrs. Stone who was just a nice, plain lady like all the other housewives, had to keep to herself and her house most of the time. She dressed simply, wore her stringy brown hair in a plain bun back of her head, spoke quietly and little, and gave the impression of being rather sad and empty about her life. Mr. Stone was very much like her, except that he was a man instead of a housewife. Mama thought he worked for some insurance company, she didn't know for sure. Mrs. Stone had been vague about it and no one cared to be nosey. And that was the Stone family, different from hers perhaps, but Beatrice couldn't see what there was about it that mama would like to change her own for.

It was the same with the Fullers, the Linders, the Goodmans, the Hills, the Hartmans. Some of them were storekeepers, some had their trades; some were large families, some were small, and all had their good points and bad. Some you liked, some you didn't. The Fullers were old people. They owned the other grocery store on the block: their oldest daughter, Dorothy, was not a bit pretty, though the two boys, Carl and Victor, looked like fairy tale princes. The Hills, who owned the other grocery store, were loud and rough, and had one son, Peter, who was just a weak, cry-baby sissy. Surely mama wouldn't want to exchange her family for theirs. The Linders - well, just the fact that fat, stupid Pearly was in it, was enough, to say nothing of Gus. Just to think of him made her feel dirty and feverish all over. And then Mrs. Linder, who was almost a midget, no bigger than Ben, and Mr. Linder, with his moustache and bad teeth, and the other two boys, Dick and Steve, who both lisped - Beatrice shuddered, not wanting in the least to be a Linder. When she came to the Goodmans, she wasn't so sure. Mrs. Goodman was so sweet; Beatrice loved to hear her sing, to

watch her eyes crease when she laughed. And then Francine, with her red hair and bold manners - it was Francine who arranged the May Parties, arranged any big neighborhood celebrations - and Robert, who was always so friendly and had a nice smile for everybody; really, they were nice children. As for Mr. Goodman, while she didn't know much about him, she couldn't help thinking he must be a pretty nice man with a wife and children like that. He had a kind face, looked happy. She never heard Mrs. Goodman complain about him or anything. Still, mama didn't either: how many times she had warned them never to talk about what went on in the family to anybody! So maybe it was like that with the Goodmans, too, though Beatrice hoped not because she didn't like to imagine Mrs. Goodman crying, she who could laugh and sing so beautifully. But anyway, she couldn't see that her own family compared unfavorably to theirs, unless she admitted that Francine would make a much better sister than Addie, and maybe Mr. Goodman - but she found it hard to think of him as papa, to call him that, though there was nobody around to hear her, while she pictured him in the room before her.

The Hartmans she thought of apart from the rest. For one thing, papa and Mr. Hartman were friends. For another, the Hartmans were cousins of the Singers. They lived in the next apartment house and their windows on the second floor faced the Berger windows on the first, across the narrow alley court. Mama and Mrs. Hartman often spoke to each other through their kitchen windows, sometimes calling for certain cake recipes that each was famous for. But since the Hartmans had only one child, Celine, who hardly ever went out because she was such a sick girl, Beatrice knew very little about them. Sometimes the Hartmans came over to spend an hour in the evening but mostly they asked friends to visit

them because it was hard to leave Celine in the house by herself. The first time Beatrice saw her, months after Celine came back from the hospital where she had spent most of her time, it was like looking at a live doll. Celine had long blonde curls, round blue eyes, and was dressed in yellow full of dainty silk bows. She sat like a doll and moved like a doll, too. She didn't have a pretty face, however, because the color was so poor and the skin so unevenly spotted. It was when she smiled or talked that she became ugly; her teeth stuck out funny and her voice got caught between lots of ehs and little coughs. She had a nervous disease, mama explained, whispering that one should never mention it or notice it. Since Beatrice felt there was something very special about her visits to the Hartman house, she looked forward to them, although Celine was not a very good playmate, being fifteen years old. But Mrs. Hartman was always glad to see her and have her come to keep Celine company; she had many beautiful dolls dressed like real children, in rich clothes and fancy ornaments. Celine would just sit on the bed and watch her mother sew them: strings of pearls, lace ruffles, a new velvet cape, a beaded blouse, brocade houseslippers - Mrs. Hartman had expensive tastes and artistic ideas. Mama said she should have been a court lady or a high-class designer because she had so many talents for handiwork. But what interested Beatrice most of all was that Mr. Hartman was so much like papa. He was a much bigger man but he had the same white skin and blue eyes and light hair showing pink where it was thin and getting bald, even the same kind of belly; and then Mr. Hartman, too, was rich and smart. He had papa's kind of voice and way of speaking, deep and slow and as though he were talking to himself. He joked and pretended to notice you on the sly, stroking his face and giving a forced, hearty grunt that sounded like aha or ahem. You could tell that papa and Mr. Hartman liked each other: they were equals. They both acted the same way,

knowing a good drink by its color and flavor, and how to enjoy the better things of life, as they said. They loved to eat, to sleep, to be left alone, to have their little fun. It was interesting to Beatrice to see them together. They acted the same towards each other as they did to everyone else, as though from a distance, apart and above. But they didn't seem in the least to mind. In fact, they seemed to appreciate each other's superiority; it was nice being understood for a change. You know they were friends and yet their friendship was not like most people's, like their wives' for instance. They greeted each other by their last names and were always formal with one another. They never troubled to go out of their way to see each other. If they happened to come together, well and good; if not, a week or two could go by without so much as a question. It was only when they talked about their wives that they struck a note of intimacy: Blanche and Caroline became Bunny and Katie. They agreed that their wives were goodnatured, skilled in the arts of cooking and home-making, quite well meaning, but alas, like all women, rather exasperating and generally foolish. the way they chatted, their petty interests, the problems they raised and magnified, their vanity and naivete - papa sucked in his cheeks and rolled his eyes as though beseeching heaven to witness his lot and Mr. Hartman lifted his hands and shook his head.

These women.....Lord have pity.

Well, sir, I guess that's how it is. Can't live with them and can't live without them. Easily, comfortably, they would then discuss politics, history, religion and business.

Beatrice, playing quietly, found herself listening, connecting. Sometimes papa would forget she was there, then somewhere along in his conversation remember

her and tell her to leave the room. Why don't you play where your mother is or in your own room? Mr. Hartman would wink and in his gruff voice say gently, that's all right, she's just a child. Or another time, you know how it is with us important men, ahem! And then she would go into the kitchen to play there. But sometimes, mama or Mrs. Hartman decided she shouldn't be there either and then she had to play by herself. Mrs. Hartman might ask mama in a low voice whether she thought Beatrice had heard something and mama would say, what does she know about such things? But mama would send her away just the same.

Anyhow, Beatrice found out all about it and not because she tried to. She just happened to be in Mrs. Hartman's house one day when it all came out by itself. She and Celine were playing in the dining-room with two of the big dolls. Mrs. Hartman was baking in the kitchen. Mr. Hartman was sleeping in the bedroom, which in that house was open to the dining-room just as mama's and papa's was in her own house. It was during a Saturday afternoon. Then Celine got tired of playing and told Beatrice she was going for a walk but that she could stay and play there if she wanted to. The dolls' dresses were all over the rug and Beatrice didn't feel like leaving before she had dressed the dolls again, so she said, all right, Celine, and sat with her back to the table, holding the dolls carefully on the floor in front of her. Later, she heard Mrs. Hartman go through the room and into the bedroom. She called Frank a few times before Mr. Hartman's voice returned a sleepy, hello girlie, what are you doing here? And then Mrs. Hartman began crying and yelling at him just as mama often did when she had a fight with papa. Beatrice sat there, frightened, not knowing what to do. She wished Celine would return. She sat there, not wanting to hear, unable to move.

Girlie, Bunny! You bum you! You think you're still where you were last night, getting drunk with a lot of other bums! Haven't you any shame, any self-respect? Isn't it enough that God has punished our child, our only child, because of you? Who else is responsible for her being born such a poor, unhappy child? How long must I suffer? How long can any one, even a saint, stand it? I've been patient, good, gentle, kind - but I can't anymore, I can't! There was a groan, the bed swayed and creaked. There was a mutter, a kind of laughing, then snores. No, I won't let you sleep, forget! You're going to hear me! Pillows and covers fell to the floor in a violent heap. If I have to bring all the neighbors in to witness my shame, I'm finished with you! This is the last time you're going to have your way, as God is my judge! From now on you're going to do as I say, in my way! There was the sound of a slap, pulling, pushing. You horse you, you stupid drunken horse, get up this minute! She tugged, weeping and angry, until her breath was exhausted.

It became too quiet; Beatrice scrambled up from the floor, banging herself against the table, and ran in. Mr. Hartmann sat hunched over the edge of the bed, his face bloated and half-awake. His pajamas were twisted, his chest exposed. He kept blinking his eyes, trying to get them to stay open. His mouth worked back and forth, tasting its dryness, its staleness. He looked at her without recognition or surprise, then at his wife. When Mrs. Hartmann saw her, she began crying again.

It's all right, Beatrice, stay here. Let the child see you, see what a man can become when he falls so low. Let Celine see you, see what kind of a man her father really is. Frank, Frank, you're killing us, your sins are turning our house into a devil's hell.

Ssh, he replied soberly, waving his hands, let me get back to myself.

So you can have it all to do over again? What for? How can we go on living like this? How long?

Please, Blanche, please - his voice was thoughtful, grave. His eyes had started to clear; his underlip curled to meet the faint moustache, sucking it between his teeth. Mrs. Hartman wept more quietly now, the anger gone, only the pain left.

What will Celine think some day, when she knows? Is that what you want, a child whose heart will turn against you, unforgiving and full of hate and blame? What's to happen to her, to you, to me? Can't you see, can't you understand what you're doing?

Yes, yes, I see - just give me another minute, I've got to wake up, to think. Mrs. Hartman stood, with statue-like determination, facing him.

This is the last time. From now on, beginning today, you're turning over a new leaf. You've had your last chance and this is your last warning - as this child is my witness. It's all right, Beatrice, don't worry. You've seen a man go from one world to another, from hell to earth. Never forget it. Your poor mama has her share, too, I know. Well, Frank? She stood before him, forcing him to look straight at her. Their eyes met, held.

You're right, Blanche, it's the last time. I'll never do it again, so help me, God. His hand lifted, steady and sure. Then he turned to Beatrice, I swear to God, not on this child's head but my own. And Beatrice, knowing she had witnessed a deep secret, softly called goodbye, Mr. Hartman, goodbye, Mrs. Hartman, and walked out slowly.

Then it was wrong and mama was right. So why couldn't papa take a promise

and swear to God like Mr. Hartman did? She didn't say anything, but now when papa didn't come home till late at night or kept mama waiting till the next day, she shared mama's pain and tears and anger against him. It was a sin and he knew it. She felt deeply ashamed and asked God to punish him, on her head. If something happened to her, then he would see. Maybe then he would feel his guilt and know how wrong he was. She wished Mr. Hartman were her papa.

There were people that mama didn't include in her comparisons. They weren't in the same class, she said. That meant differences of another kind from the one she complained about because of papa. It had something to do with the kind of friends you made with other families. There were dozens of families that mama said didn't belong. They weren't in the Berger class; they didn't mix, she said. Beatrice thought of school: 1A, 4A, 7A, herself and Ben and Addie. And then there were different schools, P. S. 5 where they went and P. S. 40 where all the other children went and then the high schools where the big boys and girls went and the law school where Charles Stone went and the medical school where Tom Weaver went and she had seen many more schools on her walks along the shopping boulevards and to the movies. But she knew mama couldn't mean classes in that sense, for families. Classes, mama said, meant nationalities and religions and ideas and social things, like Mr. Borsky being a Russian and the Adams being Catholic and Mr. Cohen being a tailor and the Grunbers being Polish. Which meant that they were different. And the way mama said it showed that she thought the questions foolish. So when Beatrice went to play in the house of the new little girl, Ruth Hacker, she didn't know that the Hacker family was not in what mama called the Berger class. Ruth was a pretty little girl with brown curly hair and

orange colored eyes and she told Beatrice she had lots of beautiful materials to play with, all kinds of silks and satins and georgettes and crepe de chines and laces and velvets and everything. The words excited Beatrice. Mama had told her she could play in the street till supper time; she didn't feel like losing precious time by going upstairs to tell mama about her new friend; she would tell mama afterwards. Ruth lived on the groundfloor in the next house where the Hartmans and Fullers did; surely mama wouldn't mind, she had friends there.

Beatrice followed Ruth into the dark apartment, feeling eager and strange. Mrs. Hooker was in the kitchen, washing dishes. She smiled when she saw that Ruth had already found a friend and told her that they could play in the dining-room. The sewing machine was in there along with barrels partly unpacked, clothes heaped on top of a trunk, the table littered with odds and ends, a rolled up rug against the curtainless windows and pieces of furniture still unplaced. But the room had the clean smell of painted walls and washed floor and they soon cleared a space around the sewing machine next to a tall looking-glass. Out came the huge assortment of remnants that her father had brought home from the drygoods store where he worked. Exclamations and cries of pleasure rallied back and forth as Ruth emptied the sewing machine and handed the materials to Beatrice. The textures, the colors, the variety! It was Fairy Land at finger's touch! She hugged the larger pieces around her. Oh the feel, the marvel, of pink crepe de chine, yellow satin, green velvet, orange georgette, purple taffeta, white velour, black silk, crimson organdy, powder blue serge, grey chiffon, damask and flowered cretonne! She wrapped herself in colors, brushed her cheek against their cools and smooths. Such fabrics! She was the Queen of Sheba, Cinderella at the Ball, the Chinese daughter of an Emperor. Ruth laughed, strutting before the mirror in her court train. By then, she had appropriated her mother's high heel shoes,

a pair of black for Beatrice and brown for herself; they shuffled and staggered about hilariously. And when they had exhausted every combination of style and color, Beatrice remembered mama and had to leave. Ruth gave her bits of cloth for a souvenir, strips of colored silks and ribbons for her dolls. They promised to play again tomorrow and every day after that.

Mama exploded when she heard about it. Did you ever, she exclaimed. What's the matter, haven't you enough friends? God knows what kind of disease you've caught playing around with a lot of old rags! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, going into a stranger's house and putting on their dirty clothes, ugh! Never mind Ruth Hooker, you go get washed good and clean this minute. Hooker, what kind of a name is that, where do they come from, who are they? Now, Beatrice, you're old enought to understand that you can't take up with every little nobody off the street. I forbid it, do you hear? Believe me, the next time I catch you going where you don't belong, I'll teach you a lesson you'll never forget! Go on, get off those clothes and get washed, I don't want to hear any more. Beatrice felt crushed, puzzled, dismayed. What had she done that was so wrong? Why couldn't she play with her nice new friend? What was the matter with the Hooker family? Dirt and diseases - she scrubbed herself hard, frightened. And how could she tell Ruth that mama wouldn't let her play there anymore? Old enough to understand, mama said - but she didn't, she couldn't.

Nor would mama let her play with her school friends. There were nice children in her class, too, Eva, Hattie and Amy and Christine, but mama said not after school, she wanted Beatrice to come straight home with Addie and Ben. So she had to go back to playing in the halls with Birdie and Edna and the children in her own house, wishing things weren't so stupid and that she could be in many places at one time.

Then one day, she was playing ball on the third floor and a terrible thing happened that made even the halls unsafe for her. She and Birdie were outside Birdie's door. Neither of them was very good at bouncing the ball underleg. They were too short and chubby to keep the count going for long. Throwing the ball against the stairs was easier, though Birdie always circled her arms to catch the ball and so missed every time. It was fun hitting the ball right on the edge of the step because then it came straight back without a bounce and that gave you an extra chance if you caught it. Soon Mrs. Singer called Birdie to come inside to try on a dress that mama was helping her sew and Beatrice kept on playing by herself. She held the ball when Mr. Adams came upstairs, to let him pass, because he lived on the top floor, but instead, he began to talk to her. She told him what she was playing and he said he would like to watch her play underleg, so she started slapping the ball and trying to keep her balance, but no matter how hard she tried, she couldn't lift her leg fast enough to keep up with the counts. After a while she was out of breath and her face was red and she was laughing. Then Mr. Adams said he knew a nice game, too, and he bet her that she couldn't do it. What's that, she asked. Will you promise not to tell anyone, he whispered, smiling nervously. Beatrice nodded, full of curiosity. He told her it was making milk. She stood there, as though glued to her feet, hardly seeing, only hearing the slow soft words he was speaking to her, and then suddenly her fear pushed her back and she turned and ran into Birdie's house. Mama was pinning up the dress hem, sitting on the floor and making Birdie turn around slowly. Mrs. Singer was getting the tucked sleeves ready. Look, Bee, I'm getting a new dress, Birdie said. Mrs. Singer looked up. Why, Beatrice, what's the matter, what's happened to you? Mama twisted her head quickly and made a frightened noise in her throat. Beatrice burst into tears and ran into

her arms. But no amount of questioning could make her tell why she was crying. Birdie said, she's jealous because her mama's making my dress, that's why, and Mrs. Singer teased her by saying, shame on you, a big girl like you, why you ought to be proud that your mother can do something for your best friend! But mama could tell something was wrong, although Beatrice kept sobbing, it's nothing, nothing's the matter. And even after mama took her downstairs and put her to bed, that's all she would say. She could remember nothing but the look on Mr. Adam's face and the way his mouth kept moving, making soft sounds, and how he had warned her against telling anybody. His bigness, his strangeness terrified her - the whole thing had happened so swiftly, her imagination tottered and fled. She didn't know why it had happened. Mama had said some families didn't belong, that the Adams were not in <u>their</u> class because the Adams were Catholic, maybe that was why it happened. She knew mama didn't consider the Linders in the Berger class either even though Addie played with Pearlie. So maybe that explained what happened with Gus that time and/now with Mr. Adams. Was that the way it would be with the whole world? There were so many people in it, people she didn't even know! And mama telling her to keep away from strangers, not to play with all kinds of children, to come straight home from school, not to go far from the house, to stay near her - mama always talking about the terrible things in the newspapers, about accidents and murders and robberies, and warning her and Addie and Ben to keep out of danger because the world was full of all kinds of crazy criminals and rotten bums who would just as soon kill their own mothers as someone else's baby. How could the world be like that? It was terrible! And in her heart she crept nearer to mama, wishing there was no one else on earth except good, kind people who wouldn't hurt a fly and whom she could love and be loved by.

Because school wasn't everything and school wasn't enough. It was the same old thing every day, with Miss Peters in her long skirt and high shoes and brown sweater, and getting on line in the yard and going upstairs and marching to the wardrobe closet, and sitting with hands folded while the roll was called and then pledging to the flag and singing My Country 'Tis of Thee, and then doing arithmetic and spelling and going to recess, and then more lessons, and meeting Addie and Ben in the yard for lunch, and then drawing and playing games in the afternoon, and at the end a handful of stars on paper and going home again. The best part of it all was the walking in the morning, climbing up the long hill after you crossed the dark street under the elevated train, watching the end of the hill against the sky come closer and closer until you were there and the sky pulled back and you saw the hill going down on the other side and St. Mary's Park below you. That was what she liked best, though Addie said it wasn't shorter. Addie said it only seemed shorter because there weren't any blocks, just the hill up and the hill down and then across the park to the school, but she said it took longer and was much harder than the other way, but Ben said, yeah and what about all the traffic and all the streets you have to cross and everything, and Addie said, it's all right for you, you're a horse, but when I get up that hill, I'm all tired and puffed out and can't do good work by the time I get to school, and Beatrice said, it's only fair, we come back your way, so why shouldn't we take turns, but Addie told her to keep out, nobody was talking to her, and that they came back the other way because mama didn't want them to use the hill in the afternoon, it got too dark for them to go through the park and past a lot of empty lots.

Anyway, they always went up the hill because Addie once tried leaving them to see who would get to school first and of course Ben made Beatrice go fast to be sure they got there first, which they did, but when mama heard about

it, she gave Addie a good hard scolding for letting the children walk by themselves. Addie cried and complained that she was skinny because of them and that she lost a pound everytime she went up that hill, but mama said, nonsense, it's good exercise and there's less traffic that way and anyway the winter will soon be here and you can't go that way because of the ice, so stop pestering me. It was a fine hill, paved all the way, on both sides of the street, though there weren't any houses, just walls of rocks that sloped up and across empty lots, and it was fun sliding and running down or just skipping, and feeling the earth and sky jumping and bumping above you and under you, and the air laughing inside you because you felt yourself flying all the way down to the bottom.

That was the best part of it, and the next best was playing in the park after lunch if the teacher on duty gave you permission. Some teachers were strict and said it was almost time to blow the whistle for line-up, but a few teachers like Mildred Carey or her friend, Miss Hunter, who had a deep voice like a man and was big and hearty, let the good children out of the building to play in the park or go to the candy store on the corner. Addie preferred to go upstairs to help in the classroom; she always asked if she could wash the blackboards or clean the closet or fix the teacher's desk or something, just so she wouldn't have to go. Beatrice and Ben had a good time in the park; there were swings and sliding ponds and places to run around with the other children. They never liked to leave the park; the whistle sounded too soon. And in the afternoon, it was hard to pass by the park and see all the children running for the free swings and getting ready to play games, while they had to go home with Addie because she wouldn't let them take a few minutes off on the side.

Because school wasn't enough and there were lots of things about it that

didn't make any sense. Like starting off every morning by saluting the flag and saying and singing words you didn't understand. Or looking at pictures and memorizing words you never used. Or going to assembly and sitting very still while Miss Dawson made a speech and hollered at anyone who moved and then hollered some more at the children who had been reported for something or other, and afterwards, listening to The Program, to boys and girls who came up on the stage, bowed to Miss Dawson and then recited poetry, and then singing songs with one teacher leading and another playing the piano with sudden stops and bangs which meant, no good, once more, and finally the marching out while Miss Dawson went around, clapping and ordering left-right, keep in step, follow the music, until the halls were empty again and all the classes were back in their rooms and the doors were shut.

Meanwhile, there were so many things, so many questions that school didn't answer, that it seemed there was no end to them. What did it mean, in 14-92 Columbus discovered America? When you counted, you came to 14, and if you kept on long enough you came to 92, but what of it? And even after Addie explained that it meant hundreds of years ago, someone by the name of Columbus discovered America, it was no use. Discovered America, nobody but Indians lived here, then Columbus came. That was all Ben knew. Mama said God made the whole world, then put Adam and Eve on earth, and little by little, the earth became like today full of people living all over the world. Thousands of years ago, 14-92, and then Saturday, Sunday, Monday, September, October, November, 19-17 one year, 19-18 the next year. No, it was no use. Wait till you grow up, you're just a baby - what kind of answer was that? She was six years old, Ben was nine, Addie was twelve, mama and papa had birthdays, too, everybody had an age, young and then bigger and bigger until old like Grandma Theresa and the man across the str

who had a long white beard and carried a cane. So many questions and no real answers. It was like when they made believe they could talk a foreign language so that nobody could understand what they were saying: eesh-catal-ep-zufum-ding-a-pasky-skidoo. Or about how far away the stars and sky were, about Europe and California, where the sun goes at night, how fast a kite flies, why birds can stay up, what makes a clock go. And when Mr. Lansing asked where was north, many children pointed up to the ceiling and others pointed out the window and he said the window was right.

It was to mama she went most of the time when she had something on her mind, although mama would often say, what's that, now what are you talking about? Why? How should I know? What do you think I am? You ask me as though I were God to know everything! What's this and how's that and why should it be! Because so it is and that's all! Did you ever, a child won't let me alone, all day long asking questions! Why don't you ask papa - he's so smart! But mama knew why she didn't ask papa; when he was home he didn't like to be bothered. So even if mama said she didn't know, it was nice to be able to talk to her about all these things. Mama didn't really get mad; sometimes she kissed Beatrice and said, that's right, find out, try to be smart and know whatever you can - not like me, just a dumb nobody who didn't even finish school. Then Beatrice would pout and say, that's not true, don't say that, mama! You know lots of things. And mama would sigh, sure, I know what they tell me, whether they're right or wrong, and I like a dope have to believe them. At least mama was honest, because when Beatrice asked her, but how do you know, the answer was never <u>I know</u>, but <u>well that's what they say</u> or <u>what do you want, that's what I was told</u>. And sometimes mama's answers made her wonder even more than the

other things she asked questions about. Like why mama put hair and nail cuttings into a piece of paper and burned them. Because when you die you have to look for all the hair and nails you forgot to burn, you can't leave them behind you. And when mama baked bread or cake, she always threw a small piece of dough into the oven, to feed the fire, she said, so that it won't eat our bread and cake. If you sneezed, mama said, good health, and pulled the bottom of your ear, so that you wouldn't get sick and leave the earth - pulling the ear meant stay down here. And if nobody was around when you sneezed to say good health and pull your ear, you said it and did it yourself. Which Beatrice did one day when she was passing a house- there were lots of people standing near a black car in front of it - and an old lady who saw her said, no, no, my child, up, and jerked the top of Beatrice's ear very quickly. Then the old lady muttered a few words and spat three times in the air, quietly,with three little dry licks of her tongue, and told Beatrice she should live a long life. And when Beatrice told mama about it, she said, that's right, it must have been a funeral, may God bless that woman and grant her a long life, too, and then mama explained that sneezing when somebody dies meant to pull the ear up because you didn't want to go down with the dead but to stay up on earth with the living. As for the old lady's spitting, that was part of a prayer, mama said. Mama did the same thing when she prayed for a curse to go away, because sometimes you suddenly felt sick for no reason and mama said it was a curse - someone had praised you and forgotten to say, may it do no harm, knock on wood - and then mama prayed in a quick low voice and spat three times in the air and when she was finished kissed you and said, there, it's gone, now you'll feel better again, and then you could go to sleep if it was at night or get up and on on playing if it was during the day. And what if nobody's around to make the curse go away, Beatrice

asked, wanting to be sure. Then, mama said, you lick the palms of your hands, one after another, and count like this up to ten and back again - 1, 1, 1-2, 1-2, 1-2-3 and so on until you start backwards, 10, 10, 10-9, 10-9, 10-9-8, 10-9-8-all the way down to 1 and then you're better. Why, she didn't know, that's what they told her. Believe it and it works, so what's the difference why? And it was the same with other things like wearing a piece of camphor tied on a string next to your skin under your underwear so that you wouldn't catch a cold in the winter time, or washing your hands by making fists and wetting them three times one after another, and then wetting your face three times with the hands open, so that you would be blessed, or standing still when dust swirled and rose in front of you, being sure to walk around it not through it because the devil was in it.... There was no end to custom, something special to each circumstance, and Beatrice was always surprised that there was still more.

She took it for granted that all children learned the same things in their homes, until the holidays started. And then it seemed that there were different kinds of holidays for different kinds of children. For a long while, she had noticed that there were days in school when some of the children stayed absent. Miss Peters would get notes from the parents asking that their children be excused, or maybe the notes came afterwards when the children came back. Beatrice had paid no attention; absence from school meant, bring a note, and that's all. Some holidays were for everybody and then nobody came to school or had to bring a note. That was always fun because it was like having an extra Saturday or Sunday in the middle of the week. A holiday like that came as a surprise; the teacher would just say, now children you don't come to school tomorrow, you don't come back until - and she would say when. Once it was called Thanksgiving

and they drew pictures of turkeys and Miss Peters said she hoped everybody would have a nice fat turkey dinner and the children giggled. But now everybody was talking about Christmas and Santa Claus, and Miss Peters had a tree in the room with a big silver star on top and the children all talked about what kind of presents they expected to find in all their stockings on Christmas morning and Beatrice felt very unhappy because mama had said Christmas was for Christian children, not for Jews. Beatrice listened enviously, hearing them talk about their churches and what they would wear and how their homes were being fixed up for the holiday and what they were buying for their mothers. Alice was singing in a choir and knew all the hymns and carols by heart. Mildred had a brand new gold chain with a little cross below her throat. Jimmy carried a picture around with him, showing a Saint surrounded by beautiful angels. They told the class stories about the baby god born on Christmas day. They made Christmas sound so wonderful, telling how Santa Claus in his red suit and white beard would come down the chimney and fill all their stockings with toys and candy and all kinds of good things. They talked about Christmas every day for a week until it seemed that school was nothing else but Christmas: they drew pictures, made holly wreaths and bells, cut out and pasted little baskets for a party Miss Peters was giving them on the last day, brought wrapped up packages to set under the tree, learned some of Alice's songs, went to the assembly to see a Christmas program, had visitors come to see their decorations and always got up when the visitors left to say, we wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Please, mama, please buy a Christmas tree, I want Santa Claus to bring me presents, too, why can't we have any fun and hang up stockings and everything?

Because Christmas is for Christians, not for Jews. Crosses, saints, baby god! Aren't you ashamed of yourself, you, a little jewish girl? The Jews

came before the Christians; we've got our star, our God, our own saints and our own religion. What more do you want? They go to church and we go to temple. If you want, I'll send you to Hebrew school, too. Santa Claus! What's the matter, aren't presents from your father and mother good enough for you any more? They put a lot of foolish ideas into your head and then you come home to put them into mine!

When papa came home, her eyes were still red from crying and all through supper she just sat looking at her plate, listening to mama complain and Addie laugh. Ah, what do you care, said Ben, we're getting the same holiday from school. But Beatrice waited till supper was done and then went up to papa herself. Please, papa, it's not just for me. All the children are buying Christmas presents for their mothers, so why can't I? And she cried and begged so hard that papa's hand reached sideways into his pocket and out came a roll of bills.

All right, miss, you win. Here's two dollars to buy Christmas presents for your mother, sister and brother. And as she clutched him, she felt papa's cheek grow wet, and heard herself promising with all her being, I'll never forget this, papa, I'll never forget you for this! And her hands were tight around the two bills and her ears full of mama's indignation and her eyes misted while papa blew his nose violently and waved her away.

And the next day there were three packages on the piano, one for each of their teachers. They were beautifully wrapped in white tissue paper and tied with red and green cords that hung down in silk tassels. A neat little card in papa's handwriting was attached to each gift saying, with best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and then their names. What bothered mama was not knowing what was inside; he must have spent a fortune on the presents.

But this time she couldn't say, who else buys presents for the teachers but you, because this time it was for Christmas and most of the children in school had already brought theirs.

Jewish people giving Christmas presents, she said, still wanting to be right.

It's a new age, Katie, a new world; you'll have to forget the old idea. Christmas is an American holiday, a legal holiday. And our children are just as American as any. Complaining isn't going to change things; it's we who have to change. Then mama got mad because she didn't want the children to think that she was wrong and papa was right and that he was on their side against her.

I suppose the next thing you know we'll be having a Christmas tree and sending the children to church and teaching them to forget they're Jews, God forbid! A fine home they would have to remember when they grow up. All right, laugh, go ahead. So I'm old fashioned. But someday they'll be glad I kept a good jewish home and bless me for it, you'll see.

Beatrice gotBen and Addie to go with her to pick out a big bouquet of flowers for mama. They went to the florist papa always used for special occasions and the man was very nice. He made up a large bunch of all the flowers they pointed to and then, when it was all fixed with ferns and little white blossoms, he asked Addie if she would like to write something on a card. Addie looked at Beatrice.

All right, said Beatrice, but please put, to mama and papa, a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, with thanks and love from Beatrice and Ben and Addie. The man gave Addie a pen and she sat down at a table in the back to write the card. When Ben looked afterwards, he cried, hey she put me last! But the

man smiled and said it didn't make any difference because all the children were the same to their parents. They paid him the two dollars and he gave them each an extra flower, promising to send the flowers by special messenger. Ben said, gee, two bucks for all them flowers, and Addie said, well, what do you expect, he's a friend of ours, isn't he? Beatrice didn't say anything; she wished she had more money to buy more presents. Papa had said for your mother, sister and brother. And of course she couldn't leave papa out. But then Addie and Ben weren't buying anything for her, so why should she worry? Apologetically she said, what do you say we save up enough money to have a real Christmas next year, so we can all chip in and buy each other presents and something nice for mama and something special for papa - Immediately, the three of them started an excited discussion of what they would buy, how much it would cost, what they would give each other and how much they could save in one year. Soon they were quarreling and at last it ended up with nobody talking to anyone else.

She didn't tell till the last minute. Then, when she hung the string between the two bedposts, they knew. They laughed and joked about it and called mama to come and see what Beatrice was doing, but Beatrice went ahead and tied her biggest stocking on the string with a clothespin and then undressed and got into bed. She didn't care, she wanted to find out for herself. Miss Peters had said it didn't matter if you had no chimney, if you were a good child all year then Santa Claus would come anyway.

Ben laughed and said, why not, I'll put my stocking up, too, only don't be disappointed if they're empty in the morning.

Addie said, such babies, believing in Santa Claus, huh!

Beatrice wouldn't answer. Inside, she was afraid they were right, but she

didn't want to stop believing. She thought of all the children who were hanging stockings near their Christmas tree and how they would wake up in the morning and find their stockings full of presents. Jimmy said he had asked Santa Claus for a train or a ship and a pair of roller skates and a cowboy suit and a beebee gun and a bag of marbles and a big green top, all the things he wanted, and when she asked him if he had been a good boy andif he thought Santa Claus would bring him all those things, he laughed and said, well,maybe not all, but some. And the other children had asked for lots of things they wanted, too, dolls, toy houses with dishes and furniture and windows and doors, new dresses and shoes, a crayon set and drawing books, a real blackboard with chalk and eraser, and all kinds of games. She wondered if they would get their wishes, if Santa Claus could remember so many things.

Ben, she whispered, leaning across to shake his arm, what would you like?

Me? Huh! He rolled over on his back and grinned up at the ceiling. A nice big sled, red and yellow, gee, would I love to belly-wop down the hill, I'd show those kids.

And would you take me, Ben?

Sure, he said, you bet, I'd let you sit on my back and down we'd go, whee!

And then what, she asked, feeling ticklish inside.

Then you'd sit on the sled and I'd pull you all the way up again. Whew! He flung himself towards the foot of the bed, steering the sides.

Mama came in with their milk and halted in front of the two stockings on the line. What's this?

Addie sat up, jealous and scornful. They're expecting Santa Claus, she intoned.

Ah, you, Ben said, you wouldn't get anything even if there was a Santa Claus,

you mean skinny cat!

Addie reached over to scratch him, crying, I'll show you who's a mean skinny cat!

Mama broke the string to come between them and almost lost her tray. The holiday hasn't even started and you're fighting already. Christmas! I don't know why they have to close school for two weeks, you'll be the death of me by then. Here, drink this and no more nonsense, do you hear? And you, she said to Beatrice, you stop this trouble-making right away.

Beatrice held the torn string and the stockings in her hands. I don't see why we can't have any fun; all the other children are going to get presents. She sat down on Ben's bed, tasting salt in her milk.

My God, what do you want, mama asked.

I don't want anything, sobbed Beatrice.

Haven't you got enough toys and everything? Maybe Christian parents wait till Christmas to buy their children things, so that's why they celebrate, but papa buys you things all year, almost every day he brings home something for me or for Addie or for you!

Yeah, and what about me, growled Ben, I never get nothing, I'm a boy!

You, you have a lot to complain about, said Addie, I don't think. They glared at each other, Ben making a fist at her and Addie sticking her tongue out at him. If mama wasn't there, their eyes said.

Beatrice just sat and cried miserably. I don't want anything, she repeated when mama threatened to tell papa about it.

Then what are the stockings for, mama demanded angrily. The children get fruit and nuts and candy and things like that inside, that's what, Beatrice hiccupped, her eyes screwed against the light and gleaming with tears.

Aw, let her hang them up, Ben said, what's the harm? Mama looked at the two of them and shrugged, then waited till Beatrice had tied the string back to the bedposts, and put out the light.

After a while in the darkness, Addie's voice struck, do you know, I wouldn't mind getting a nice little ring with a diamond in it.

O boy, yawned Ben, O boy, for a pip of a sled and a two wheeled bike and -

Of course, Addie said, I could use a nice small wristwatch, gold maybe, or one of those lockets which open.

Yeah, sighed Ben, maybe we should of put our orders in ahead of time.

Well, said Beatrice, this isn't the only Christmas, is it?

Naw, said Ben, turning over to bury another yawn, Christmas is every year. Beatrice smiled, pressing Addie's arm around her. She wondered if it was too late for Santa Claus to bring them Christmas presents this year. Even if he only filled their stockings. And then Christmas was ten days. Maybe he couldn't come to all the children in one day and night. She fell asleep, wondering what to ask for, wondering if she had been a good girl.

In the morning there were three stockings on the line, full of bulges and heavily loaded. Addie almost shrieked with laughter, choking, mama hung mine up, too!

Ben scratched his head, grinning, sure, what do you think I did? Hey, Bee, wake up, look! He jumped on the other bed and bounced her up and down. She came rushing out of sleep.

Santa Claus, she gasped.

Addie looked at her suspiciously. Say, I bet you put my stocking up!

Why, I didn't, honest, Addie! She kissed her little finger and raised her arm way up, sworn proof.

Well, you can't tell me it was Santa Claus, said Addie, grimacing, everything in here is mama's.

So what, said Ben, come on, let's dump'em. They cleared spaces on their beds and lifted everything out - fruits, nuts, candy, cooky packages. Suits me, said Ben, tearing open his box of fig newton favorites. Addie had her chocolate and vanilla oreos with cream fillings. Beatrice had a circus box of animal crackers. The candies were fruit centers, toffee, caramels, each wrapped in its designed and labelled cover, the kind papa always brought home for them. The raisins were loose among pistacchio nuts, almonds, walnuts, chestnuts, Brazil nuts.

Mama must have emptied the closet, howled Addie, unable to stop laughing.

Why, can't Santa Claus bring the same thing if he knows we like them, said Beatrice. Papa came in all dressed up, looking very cheerful. The children stared at him, surprised.

Hi, pop, said Ben, waving a half-chewed fig newton at him, Merry Christmas.

Merry Christmas, shouted Beatrice and Addie together.

Merry Christmas to you, he said. He was in high spirits, no doubt about it. Mama came in beaming behind him. She had on a fresh apron, her hair combed, her face powdered, wearing shoes and stockings. Papa pinched her cheek. Yes, sir, there sure is a Santa Claus, eh Katie?

Mama couldn't keep the news from them. Mr. Schumann gave papa a big check, children, a Christmas bonus.

Whee, hurray, how much, papa? Cries of delight filled the small bedroom. Papa's lips kept twitching with pride; he could still feel Mr. Schoenberger's hearty hand clasp, the thump on his shoulders.

Oh boy, maybenow I can have my sled!

Oh papa, if I could have a ring with a little diamond or a small gold wristwatch maybe!

And what about a nice seal coat for your wife this winter?

And don't forget me, yelled Beatrice, unable to think of a single thing she had fallen asleep asking Santa for.

Hey, not so fast, laughed papa, what about your old man, don't he get something, too?

Mama winked at them. Don't worry, there's enough for all of us. More whoops and cheers and hugs and kisses followed. They had a happy breakfast, and for once, papa didn't try to stop them from talking.

Beatrice told Birdie all about it, how Santa Claus had come in the night and put up Addie's stocking next to hers and Ben's, and filled them all with good things to eat, and left an excuse that he would come back later with their presents because he was so busy going around to all the children, and about the big bouquet of flowers the messenger was bringing for mama and papa, and that it wasn't true that Christmas was only for Christians, and what Miss Peters had said, and all about the children in her class. Till Birdie began to cry and went off to complain to her mama.

It was a wonderful week. First, Ben got his Arrow sled, a big, shiny red and yellow one, with long steel runners and heavy handlebars and a thick rope for steering - he whistled, punched his fists against the palms of his hands, broke into giggles of embarrassment, even got tears in his eyes. It was so big, so beautiful, the best one he'd ever seen. Why, it was heads taller than he, standing up on end. He could feel his strength lifting to meet it, in his arms and back and chest. He swung Beatrice in the air, intoxicated with his new power. Lovingly he bore his trophy to the street, careful to avoid the least

threat of scratch or bump. Happily, nervously, he let his friends handle it, touch it, but he let no one lift it. His test flight was a cautious one, sitting feet firmly planted on the broad front bars, holding the steering rope in the tight control of sure hands. He rode down the hill slowly, aware of all the eyes behind him, and brought the sled to a halt in the ash-strewn area near the bottom of the hill, to one side. Beatrice was waving and running on the sidewalk, already half-way down. He grinned and waved back. What a beauty, that sled! The wood gleamed in the sunshine, more yellow than any yellow anywhere. Before the morning was over, he had treated all the kids to a ride, showing them how to kneel or sit behind him so that their shoes wouldn't scuff the runners or the sides of the seat. Beatrice waited patiently for her turns, glad to watch between times and catch her breath. The thrill of going down, the somersault feeling of earth and sky inside, the swish of snow under those smooth parallels, the joy of yelling freely to the wind, the safe clutch around Ben's neck - not too tight, don't choke me! - the long pull up, holding part of the rope, the sense of shared ownership, having Ben for a brother - it was a glorious morning, the first of the winter's snow season, the beginning of a new weather concern, can we sleigh today? And how many places to try out: the lot on Tinton Place, the steep hill on Crow Avenue, the one to St. Mary's Park!

Addie got her watch. Papa had Mr. Katz bring samples and take measurements. He picked out the one Addie liked best, a flat rounded hectagonal, 14 carat gold, 16 jewels, Swiss. Addie could hardly wait for the watch to be fastened on a black band with gold clips. Mr. Katz promised to have it ready next day.

Mama was pleased in a halfhearted way. All right, she said, I always said we'd give her a watch, but for her graduation, not now! She was just twelve in June. What will you give her on her thirteenth birthday if you give her a gold watch like this just for Christmas?

A diamond ring! exclaimed Addie, hugging papa's sleeve.

Don't worry, girlie, papa said, if all goes well - and he waved one hand in the air, looking at mama in a special way.

Mama understood without words. May God grant it, amen, she sighed. And she hushed the children, not wanting them to be too happy over their good luck, for fear of inviting a curse, of tempting the devil. Don't let it go to your head. Why give people a chance to talk? In this world it's better to keep good news to yourself. You never know - robbers, jealousy, sickness, changes in business - she ended vaguely, not wanting to invoke the evils by being too definite.

Mama's seal coat came next. Papa took them downtown to look around. He knew where to go. He waved the sidewalk pests away. Almost every five or six steps, someone ran out of a doorway to draw customers inside. Papa just shook his head and walked on, not even condescending to tell what he was after. It was curious how they knew what he was looking for; they swore they had unbelievable values in women's and children's coats at the lowest prices to be found in the world. Mama heard them anxiously, murmuring to papa to stop and look a minute, maybe there was something special, but papa just kept right on walking with his long swift stride until they reached the store he wanted. Mama chewed her lips nervously, trying to smile at the head-salesman who knew papa. A big store meant big prices. She examined coats and labels, constantly on the look out for the price tag. Papa just brushed his nose with his index finger and told the salesman to bring the best. Never mind wasting time, he said, I don't have to wait to see the best last. I know a good thing when I see it. The salesman was pleased with papa, you could tell that. He called to a clerk upstairs, sent an errand boy to the back of the store, and told mama to have a seat, and he looked at papa and smiled and rubbed his hands. Eight coats were brought in.

If you're a connoisseur, an expert, then I don't have to say anything, said the salesman, the garments speak for themselves. He folded his arms and planted his legs firmly on the carpeted floor, his head leaning sideways on his shoulder.

Papa didn't answer. He picked up one coat after another, fingered the fur, bent down to blow on it, examined the lining and the workmanship, then took two of the coats over to the door to test them in the light, and said abruptly, I'll take this one.

What, without knowing the price,mama exclaimed. Papa lifted his eyebrows and held the coat open for her, considering it unnecessary to reply.

The salesman's smile had almost frozen as he watched the proceeding; then when mama had the coat on, he came out of his pose and put his hands on his hips. Mr. Berger, I have to hand it to you, you certainly know how to pick them. That coat you've got there, that coat is the finest in this store, I don't have to tell you it's the finest in this city, you know that or you wouldn't have come here. Well, he asked mama, unable to understand how anyone could refrain from bursting into a song of ownership.

Well, said mama not at all impressed. Papa was busy adjusting the shoulders, fitting the collar properly, noting where changes would be necessary.

Now, Mr. Berger, you know we won't let that garment out until it fits perfectly; our fitter knows his business backwards. Just leave everything to him. You won't see another coat like it in a thousand years, Mrs. Berger.

Naturally, mama said, imitating papa by blowing close to the fur. Beatrice loved its soft coolness, the way it whirled under her breath and reddened underneath.

Oh mama, it's beautiful, she whispered. Mama signalled her to be quiet.

The more we like it, the more they'll charge, she mumbled.

What do you say, Katie, hm, papa asked in an undertone.

What do I say, she repeated, it looks like a good coat, of course, but the cost? She held up her hand and rubbed her fingers.

Forgot it, he said. A look passed between them which said, Hmm, you know I'm grateful, please don't go to too much expense; it's all right, Katie, I want to give you something nice. Aloud he said, it's your first fur coat, you deserve one, you've waited a long time, and mama answered, but don't let them fool you, if it's too much I can take one of the others. The salesman waited politely for the conference to end; he pretended to be thinking. Then papa went over to talk with him and another pantomime began. The salesman laughed and shook his head, grew serious and put his hand on his heart, waited till papa had finished talking, shook his head some more, and then raised his hand to attract the manager's attention. The manager arrived, nodded his head, listened to both sides, asked mama for the coat, talked to papa with an occasional fluttering of hands, listened some more, and then seemed to come to some agreement. Mama watched and listened nervously, trying to catch papa's eye. Finally it was decided. Papa gave mama a secretly triumphant look as he came towards her and she breathed a sigh of relief. Her expression changed, she was obviously pleased, though her eyes continued to question him. Close to her, he chuckled and said, don't worry, it's worth twice what I got it for. She was not entirely convinced. She knew a fur coat couldn't cost a little, but how much more than a cloth coat, it worried her to think.

And then papa told the salesman to bring Beatrice a new coat. The old one seemed suddenly shabby, the leggings worn and the sleeves short. Even mama could see Beatrice needed a new coat. So the salesman brought out little coats in different colors, some with fur collars and cuffs, some with attached muffs or shawls or hats to match.

It was fun trying them on before a mirror. It was mama who found the brown teddy-bear outfit. Beatrice loved it right away; it was just her size and she liked the short rough hairs which bristled up so thickly. She tried to blow them apart but they just stayed stiffly in place. Teddy-bear coat, she said and laughed. Buying her coat didn't take long at all. She was able to wear it right away, while her old one was wrapped in a cardboard box. Mama's coat would be ready by the end of the week.

They went to a nearby restaurant to celebrate. Just to have a bite, papa said. Beatrice enjoyed the white marble tables, the assortment of rolls, the sour cream and cheese blintzes, the Greek salad and eggplant which papa fixed with oil and vinegar and finely cut scallions. They talked about the fur coat all the time, mama trying to be convinced thatthe price was a good investment and papa assuring her it was.

This is just the beginning, he said. With a little luck and God's help, well, there won't be anything you can't have, and you won't have to beg for it, either, you know me.

Mama agreed, saying, believe me, you could be the best husband in the world if you wanted to, and she sighed.

A man's got his faults, the same as the rest, but at least I do what I can, papa said and again Beatrice saw a look that was almost sad in his dreamy,pale blue eyes.

Papa blew the family to a big New Year's Eve celebration, at Perlman's, too. Beatrice could hardly recognize the place. It was all covered with paper festoons and streamers and balloons, and there were frizzly hats and horns and rattlers and blowers on every table, along with ferns and bowls of fruits

and holiday souvenirs. There was a five-piece band and many more singers and entertainers than before and everyone was dressed in evening clothes. They were the only children in the restaurant and it made them feel very special to be there. The little organ piano had been moved to the rear and Beatrice took Ben to show him how it worked. Everybody burst out laughing when a few funny notes came shrilling across the room. Papa called them back to the table but didn't scold them because everyone had enjoyed the joke.

Because the whole family was together, mama had a wonderful time; she laughed and talked to the people around her, made happy toasts with her wine, encouraged the children to eat at every course - not too much bread, there's more coming - and rattled and blew and drummed as loudly as any. The noise mounted loudest at the mid-night signal; lights went out and everyone shrieked; kisses were exchanged; Happy New Year's went chasing across the room; there was thumping and stamping and all the tin toys blew. From the street came echoes of celebrations elsewhere. Church bells could be heard tolling out the old year and ringing in the new. Never had she heard the like before, never been up so late - for Beatrice it was the best party she had ever known: mama and papa and Addie and Ben all laughing and singing together, all having a happy time, all joined in their oneness, confirming her in her joy that this Now was always and forever, the same familiar togetherness that life for her had always been at its most beautiful best and that nothing could ever divide them or change them or end their this-now reality.

The school term continued into the new year and brought promotions at the end of January. Addie and Ben were kept busy taking tests for a week. Papa made them study every night and checked through their notebooks very carefully. Beatrice heard a lot about fractions and percents and decimals and wondered if

there was anything papa didn't know. She was sure he was smarter than the teachers because he knew the subjects for every term while they only taught one class.

Why don't they make you a principal like Mr. Lanning, she asked one evening when they were all sitting around the dining-room table, doing lessons. Addie raised her eyesbrows and pursed her lips at such a ridiculous idea. Ben stared at her and then at papa, as though such an idea had never occurred to him, and then rejected it with his hand, grinning.

Papa just cleared his throat and nodded, that's all right, if I had the chance you children are getting, there's no telling what I might have been, something even better than a principal.

Addie looked cross, disturbed - that Beatrice! Suddenly, she threw down her pencil and began to cry. I don't care, I'm not going to work day and night every day and all day long - school, piano, Hebrew lessons, homework, and studying and work, work, work! I don't care if I fail, I don't care if I get left back, I don't care about anything! I'm sick and tired and wish I was dead!

Papa grew livid, afraid to lose his temper. He pretended not to have heard and went on helping Ben with his arithmetic problem. Addie sat back with her thin legs crossed, whimpering, using her braid ribbons as a handkerchief. Ben's face became sulky; he scowled and mumbled in reply to papa's coaching. Beatrice slipped away to find mama, sensing trouble in the air. When she came back alone, after looking for mama at three neighbor's doors, she found Addie in the bedroom, red-eyed and miserable. Addie began screaming at her, hate and fury convulsing her throat. What do you want, go away, why can't you leave me alone? I hate you, do you hear, I hate you! I hate everybody, I hate myself, I wish I'd never been born! And she threw herself against the wall, crying ma, oh ma.

The dining-room grew noisy - a slap, a yell, a chair falling. Beatrice ran in, with mounting alarm. Ben was running around the table with papa after him. Books and papers went slipping to the floor.

I'll teach you to talk back,papa roared and his face was venemous with anger. Ben howled, running back and forth, keeping out of reach. Papa's belt came hurtling through the air, the end flicking, catching arm, wood, chandelier. Beatrice crouched at the side of the piano, her fingers pinching her cheeks. I'll teach you to be respectful if it's the last thing I do! If you want to be a bum, then get the hell out of here! No son of mine can talk back to me and get away with it! Buy you a sled, eh? Give you good clothes? You think I don't know what you're doing with that violin? Buy him the best, hire a fine European teacher, and what happens? A loafer, a good for nothing, doesn't want to study or practice or keep clean or anything, just hang around the lots and fight all day! I'll show you a fight, I'll tear you to pieces! And the chase began again, more savage than ever. The belt was ripped from his hand, the table was shoved against him. A book flew, Ben ducked, and it crashed against the wall, just missing the window. Panting now, papa rushed into the kitchen and returned with the long narrow rolling pin mama used for rolling out her bread dough. I'll kill you, he bellowed, I'll beat you black and blue! There was another crash, a scream.

Papa, please papa, stop, stop, but papa just yelled, keep out of my way or so help me God, I won't be responsible!

The door slammed and mama ran in, her lips blue with cold and her eyes wild with confusion. Max, Ben, what's the matter, what's going on? She seized papa by the arm, raised the rolling pin high in the air and brought him to a halt. Are you crazy or what? What are you trying to do,kill him? You madman,

you lunatic! Did you ever, a woman can't leave her house alone for even a minute, without something happening! Pooh, may this fall on my worst enemy's head! And then papa and Ben both began talking at once, each trying to tell what had happened. And Addie was wailing in the bedroom and Beatrice was crying and mama's face looked distraught.

All right, papa thundered, wait and see; he'll grow up to spit in our faces and he'll have you to thank for it!

Well, what do you want to do, mama asked, teach him or murder him? A man can't learn to talk nicely to his children, to be gentle and show them the difference between right and wrong! A fine thing to teach him with, a stick big enough to break his head! My God, Max, you're old enough to know how to be a father, instead of acting like I don't know what! A woman brings a child into the world with enough trouble and pain, she sees him get sick and fall into all kinds of accidents, she does her best day and night to look after him, to keep him well, to help him grow - and then this, right in her own home! And then the effort left her and she, too, began to cry, holding Ben's head safely, close to her body, and swaying.

Papa kept striding up and down the long hallway, trying to collect himself, to vent his anger against the narrow walls that wedged him in. I'm through, do you hear, I'm through! You take care of their lessons after this, you bring them up! I don't want to have anything to do with them again, I don't want any part in the way they turn out! Let them thank you for their failures and consequences, let them thank you for being good-for-nothing, worthless creatures who never amount to a damn, not me! I had to sweat and slave my way up through childhood without any help. Then let them do the same. What do I care? I

wanted to make something of them. I've done everything I could to raise them up so that they wouldn't have the hard time I had! And what do I get out of it? Their own mother turns against me, blames me! All right, to hell with all of you, the whole goddam bunch of you! My eldest doesn't want to practice the piano, she gets skinnier and worse from day to day, eating her heart out and crying for God knows what; my only son runs around with a lot of bums and learns how to get tough and talk back to his father; while my youngest is as fresh as paint and only knows how to argue her way out of being obedient. A fine family, congratulations!

Ben sat down on a chair in the corner, nibbling his tie with nervous finger and thumb. Beatrice helped mama clear up the table and straighten everything out. At any moment, she expected papa to pack his things and leave the house as he had threatened to do so often. But he didn't. She wished he would, then worried that he might. Not for their sake, but mama's. At last papa crossed through the dining-room, pulled the portieres together, lighted the bedroom lamp and started getting undressed. Mama beckoned Ben and Beatrice to tiptoe out of the room. When she got them into their bedroom, she told them to hurry and get to sleep without another sound. They needed no warning. In five minutes, they were in bed. Only later, when the house was still and ready for the night, did Beatrice slip into the bathroom, close the door, and start to cry out her heart, asking God why such things had to happen.

But Addie and Ben were excused from everything else until the tests were over and they were safely settled for the new term. Mama said papa would get over his madness if they worked hard to be promoted; not that there was any danger of their being left back, but it would never do for them to be promoted

with less than the highest marks. And when they came running from school on the last day of the month, overjoyed with their final A/A report, papa shook his head, satisfied, ready toforgive them. He had returned early from his office to be home when they showed up with their cards. He at once took them to the boulevard for their rewards. Addie received her first fountain pen and pencil set, a beautiful Parker junior, marble-grey with blue streaks, tied on a ribbon around her neck. Beatrice got a real notebook, a new crayon and pencil set in a green, imitation leather box-case, and two story books with pictures to be filled in with color. Ben waited, without saying a word. His birthday always came at mid-year promotion. When they came out of the stationery store papa said, well, I guess that's all, hm, and he looked at Ben mischievously. Ben's hands twitched inside his pockets; he flushed, tried to smile, turned his eyes away embarrassed, and wished he knew what was on papa's mind. Then papa chuckled and said, it's all right, you've earned it, what is it? Ben heaved a few deep breaths, feeling tongue-tied and awkward. What's the matter, don't you want anything, papa said, pretending to be surprised. Ben stretched and twisted his neck, feeling warmer by the second; he didn't like being teased in front of his sisters, who stood there watching him with foolish smiling faces. All right, said papa, if that's how you feel about it, c'mon, we'll go home. Ben walked along, saying nothing. Suddenly papa stopped in front of a large store. Before they could get more than a glimpse at the window, papa marched them inside. Ben could no longer keep quiet. I'm getting a bike, he whispered to Beatrice and squeezed her arm so hard she yelled ouch.

For a ten year old boy who's going to do a lot of growing in the next few years, papa said.

Ben looked over the whole stock lined against the walls, then pointed and said, how much for this one? It was seventy-five dollars, sturdy, adjustable, trim, with light, bell and brake. It fairly glittered. The quiet, shy Ben turned into a business man; he knew trade names, bicycle points, the differences between tires, asked questions, tried the seat and pedals, balanced the handlebars and made the salesman work for his sale. Papa looked on respectfully, recognising that Ben knew more about bicycles than he did. And when it was bought, it was Ben who closed the deal, demanding repair guarantees for a year and the right to have the bicycle checked and reserviced as often as necessary. The owner was only too glad to have a big cash sale.

Ben walked and rode the bicycle alongside the pavement all the way back. Is she a beauty, just look how she moves, so easy and smooth. Pop, I tell you she's a daisy, a honey, she'll last a lifetime, believe me.

Papa nodded admiringly, well, enjoy it, son, but careful, remember, no racing or crazy stunting, and above all no chances on traffic streets. You know me - if you make good, I'll get you an automobile next.

What, said Addie, why he's just a kid!

That's all right, said papa, in a few years he won't be.

And what about me, she demanded, why don't you promise me an automobile?

Ah, girls can't drive, said Ben, they don't have any sense of machinery.

Oh is that so, said Addie, a lot you know! Papa told them to stop talking about it or the next thing mama would be wanting to drive a car, too, which heaven forbid.

And don't you want to drive a car, asked Beatrice, trying to imagine papa with the wheel in his hand.

Not me, answered papa, I'll take a chauffeur.

You won't need one, pop, said Ben, I'll drive you around just as sweet and easy as this baby, just you wait and see. Ten years old, he felt like a man, strong, sure, able.

It was fun getting a new teacher, going to a new room, having a new seat. Miss Henley was a fat, jolly teacher. She had brown hair in a big bun on top of her head, nice ears and nose, pretty teeth and a double chin which shook when she laughed. She wore big loose dresses and always kept her keys in one of the pockets. Everything about her looked comfortable, the way she pushed her sleeves up and bared her arms to the elbow, the way she walked and talked, the way she sat in the big highchair in the front of the room near the window, the way she wrote on the board, the way she read stories, everything.

Beatrice was made the paper monitor for all the rows because she had the front seat next to the window. She was now sixth in line, proof that she was growing. Little Annabelle Critch was still first on line, the smallest one in the class; it looked like her seat would always be next to the door. When Miss Henley had lined the children in size places, everyone wanted to stretch and be taller than the one in front, but poor Annabelle couldn't escape being first. Miss Henley pinched her frizzled curls and said, you should worry, good things always come in small packages, don't you know that? And all the children laughed, glad that they weren't in Annabelle's place. They had already forgotten Miss Peters, although they had promised to love her forever when they said goodbye. But when dismissal time came, a few of the children went to visit Miss Peters. She seemed more interested in the little boy who wouldn't stop crying because his mother had not come for him. She told him it wasn't nice

for a big boy who had started school to cry, that he didn't have to be frightened, that he wasn't lost and that his mother would soon arrive. Beatrice looked at the little boy strangely, thinking what a long time ago she had been a baby starting in 1A. Then she ran off to meet Addie and Ben to tell them all about her new class and to hear about theirs.

For a while, being in 1B seemed like a big change from having been in 1A. The new reader had real stories with more words in it and the print was smaller. Then, too, Miss Henley showed them how to fix their papers differently, with name, class, school and date on top. Arithmetic papers were folded in eight boxes, spelling papers in half. And Miss Henley knew lots of word games which they played during reading lessons. Also, instead of stars, she stamped little pictures on their papers if they were good. She winked and said, I bet you don't know what I'm going to give you. She had lots of rubber stamps and different ink pads and sometimes you got a red flag and sometimes a green one or the date or her name or A or 100% or a colored animal, fruit or vegetable. Everybody tried hard to get a different thing each time. It was fun collecting the stamps and pasting them in your book; Beatrice kept the last page of her new notebook for them.

But after a while, school became the same again and it wasn't until the Chinese Play that anything special happened. Miss Henley told them they were going to give it in the assembly and that she would pick out only the very best children to be in it. She taught them a Chinese dance and told them about Chinese costumes and even brought them things she had collected in China when she was there. Nobody knew where China was or what the play was about, though Ernie Ronson said there was a Chink laundry on his block and showed the class

how he looked and talked. Miss Henley laughed and said it was true they had narrow slanty eyes and yellow skin and talked differently, but that it wasn't nice to call them Chinks. She said the Chinese people were very clean and polite and had many wonderful things in their country and that America could learn a lot from that old, fine world.

Beatrice was one of the dancing girls. Miss Henley gave them drawings to take home to show their mothers how to make their Chinese costumes. Mama thought it was wonderful and she made one for Beatrice just like it, a long kimono that reached to the floor and had wide sleeves and a broad sash tied around the middle. It was made of a bright flowered crinkle crepe with soft slippers to match. The sash was made of yellow satin to match the big chrysanthemum she wore over each ear. With her straight black hair parted in the middle and the bangs on her forehead, she looked just like a little Chinese princess, Miss Henley said. Hattie and Eva had pretty costumes, too, and the three talked excitedly in a corner until it was time to enter the assembly room. Many mothers were there. Miss Henley stood up front near the piano to give the signals. They were arranged in a double row of six partners and they came slowly down the center aisle, moving their arms to the rhythm of their steps. Nobody forgot or missed a step. They just looked at each other and smiled, knowingly. Everybody clapped when they finished. Then they ran backwards with tiny running steps to the hall outside the assembly room. After that they had to go quietly to their rooms, take off their costumes, and then use a different staircase back to their assembly seats without disturbing anyone. After the program was finished, Miss Henley invited the parents to stay and see the Chinese collection exhibited on the platform. It was a great success, Miss Dawson said,

and for once she spoke in a friendly voice and didn't holler at anyone. Later, Miss Dawson came to congratulate the 1B class personally and told Miss Henley she felt like eating those cute Chinese dolls who had danced for her. Then she promised that if they were very good children all term, she would let them do the Chinese Play again for the graduation exercises, which was the most important event of the school and would come at the end of June. Miss Henley seemed very pleased and rewarded them by telling them stories and playing games all afternoon.

Mama swore she never saw anything so beautiful before. She described it to papa glowingly. I'm telling you, Max, you should have seen her. Like a doll. Everybody said she was the most beautiful child there. Mama made her get all dressed up again to show papa. Papa shook his head merrily, putting his hands together over his chest and shuffling his feet forward, and then did the up and down chopstick motion with two fingers in the air. Afterwards he gave her a dime for a malted treat in the candy store. Addie said she ought to save the costume for the May Party and Beatrice thought that was a good idea, so mama folded everything away in the trunk.

Beatrice heard a lot that term about the war. In the assembly they sang Over There with gray haired Mr. Raymond who taught the eighth grade, leading. He waved his arms vigorously and made the children sing out loud <u>and we won't be there till we're over over there</u>. It was a nice song, like a march, and the whole school was singing it, humming it, whistling it everywhere. The Yanks were <u>our</u> soldiers and <u>over there</u> was where they were fighting a war. Collections were taken up every day for the Red Cross, for a new battleship, for war orphans, for soldier gifts, for liberty bonds and savings stamps. At every assembly,

reports were given on the amounts collected throughout the school, which class was first, which children were in the lead, and the goal set for next week amidst cheers and applause. All the programs were patriotic. The school flag was much in use; red, white and blue hair bows and ties were popular; fervent speeches were made by the upper grade boys and girls. The spirit was caught in great earnestness,applause and coins. It was all for us, for America, for victory, for democracy, for liberty, for freedom. Everything was somehow connected with the word war and what it was all about Beatrice didn't know.

On the cover of one of Addie's new song sheets was the picture of a little girl sitting in her bed, praying. It was night and throughthe window you could see the stars. The song was about her daddy who was far from home and she asked God to please send him back soon. Beatrice felt very sorry for the little girl. That had something to do with the war, too. Addie was allowed to buy a new song sheet every week and sometimes she let Beatrice come along to help her pick one out. They went to a music store on the boulevard and there was a piano for trying out the new songs. The song sheets were on a large rack, about thirty of them, and Beatrice looked at the pictures on the covers to see which she liked best, but Addie said you couldn't go by that. She wanted songs that she could play. She always played about ten songs before she decided which to buy, although she often played the same ones she had tried out before. Beatrice learned the words quickly so she could sing without looking over Addie's shoulder. She could tell from the way Addie played the tune whether it was a sad song, a funny song or a love song and she made the words sound accordingly. They had a big pile of song sheets in the piano seat bench, but when papa was home, he got tired of listening to those songs. He said, if you were to spend more time practicing your lessons, you could be playing some real music, instead of that

cheap trash. What do you think I'm spending money on your lessons for, to make you a bangbangbang player in the movies or music halls? Come on, play me something nice, and he would hum something from a waltz, maybe, or an air from an opera or some other thing she was studying with her teacher. And Addie would, glad to please papa. Since he could tell when she made a mistake, she tried to do her best. Then Beatrice felt jealous because he liked the playing more than he did her singing and although he acted satisfied whenever she performed for company, she could tell it wasn't thesame kind of satisfaction that he got when Addie played by herself. It was like when he listened to the victrola and wouldn't let anybody talk. But Beatrice noticed that when Addie played for company, they didn't listen half as much as they did when she and Addie entertained together. So maybe papa was just peculiar, though she suspected it had something to do with his being superior.

That term Beatrice learned about history. There were holidays called Washington's and Lincoln's birthdays. Miss Henley told the class about them. George Washington was the father of our country, she said, the first great American and the first president of the U. S. He was a great general who fought for American independence. When he was a little boy he cut down a cherry tree and when his mother asked who did that, he answered, I did, which showed what an honest boy he was; he never told a lie. That was why they had a day off from school, because of George Washington. And in the assembly there was a picture of him with long white hair, wearing a costume trimmed with lace. Beatrice thought he must be a kind of saint and wondered if he was a relative of Uncle Sam whose picture was in the yard saying Fight for Your Country, but she didn't ask anybody because she thought maybe she was wrong; they didn't look alike. Abraham Lincoln's picture was in the assembly, too, on the other side of the piano. He had dark curly hair and a short beard. He freed the slaves, Miss Henley said.

The children liked the story about Abe Lincoln; he was poor. He chopped wood and studied till late at night by the fireplace. He was honest, too, and when a woman forgot her change in a store where he was working, he had to walk a long way to find her and give it back to her. Then when he grew up he became president and fought a war for the union. Papa had a union where he worked and when Beatrice asked him why he didn't fight for it so that he could become president, he just looked at her as though she was crazy. I've got enough troubles with the union without belonging to it, he said. President, huh, what do you know about such things, he said. When she told him about Abraham Lincoln, he started to laugh and gave her a nickel to buy something with, saying it's a good thing I'm sending you to school.

Then there weren't any more holidays until Easter and when it came she complained because mama said she couldn't have a basket with bunnies and eggs like the children in school, and once more it seemed that there was an Easter for Christian children which was different from the one for Jews called Passover. But it didn't matter too much because Passover was so nice, anyway. Papa let them buy a big bouquet of flowers for mama as a surprise when she came back from the synagogue and they had lots of good things to eat after the service. And again, Beatrice was allowed to hide the matzoh which papa had put on the silk pillow under the napkin, and later opened the door to let the angel in and when she came back to the table she was sure the angel had been there because the angel's glass of wine had a little less in it than before, Ben had to ask papa the four questions and his voice was like singing and papa nodded back and forth with his eyes closed, sometimes helping Ben with a Hebrew word, and even mama tried to keep up with the book, stopping every once in a while to ask

papa the place and then skipping a few pages towards the front because that was the end of the book. Beatrice wished papa would hurry and get through so that they could all sing together the long Easter song: Once upon a time there was a tree and God wanted the fruit to fall but the tree refused, so God created a bear to shake it but the bear refused, so one after another God created a dog to bite the bear and a stick to beat the dog and a fire to burn the stick and water to put the fire out and a cow to drink the water.... until God at last came down and then everything did what it was told and the tree let the fruit fall. How she loved the song, with its repetitions and additions and the inflections in mama's voice and the humor of the whole thing.

It was a happy holiday and she enjoyed it, because it was so special in every way. They got new clothes and mama changed all the dishes, and even the pots and pans had to be scoured in boiling water with red hot rocks to be made like new again, and everything they ate had to be different from the rest of the year. They had matzoh instead of bread and honey instead of sugar, and all kinds of dishes prepared with melted chicken fat. For a day or two, it was fun, and then they got tired of eating matzoh every day. The hardest part of all was having to do without candy, and it seemed as though the week would never end. But of course it did and the visits and visitors stopped and the special dishes were put away till next year and they went back to eating as usual and then school began again.

Something else besides the holiday was over. Spring had come. All the children returned to school in lighter clothes. Miss Henley had a bunch of pussy willows on her desk; they looked like sleeping caterpillars, all curled up nice and soft to touch. Overnight, the days seemed brighter, longer. There was something in the air that made you feel like dancing or skipping. Maybe it had

something to do withwearing silk socks and patent leather sandals and a silk plaid jumper that crisscrossed in the back and came down the front like suspenders and buttoned at the waist band with large pearl buttons. Tucked inside the box pleated skirt she wore a white crepe de chine blouse which had a collar and cuffs just like a boy's. Beatrice loved the Scotch lassie skirt and the soldier hat and coat to match. Maybe that was why she felt so airy and springlike. The air had such a nice smell, like dust after rain. The grass was up in the park and the trees looked ready for leaves, so soft and gentle now; not like before, dark and stiff. But sometimes the wind came sweeping around a corner to remind you that March had not gone very far away and sometimes it rained as though the sky would never stop leaking. But the air smelled like spring and neither the wind nor rain could fool you. And the air won out and it was a real spring with fresh green leaves and sunny blue skies and long afternoons till dark and by the time April was over the whole world was ready for the May Party.

This time she walked between the two big floats. She was a Chinese girl in her kimono, slippers and chrysanthemums. Around her were Gypsies, Turks, Russians, Arabians. Ben was with the Boy Scouts and soldiers and sailors, wearing his new white longies, middy blouse, tie and starred hat. He envied the boys in the band. What's the good of studying the violin, he said, now if it was the drum or the bugle or something like that! Addie was a lady-in-waiting; she wore a pink organdy dress with a hat to match and she carried a bouquet of pink paper roses with long silk streamers. Papa said she looked very sweet and pretty, like a young girl should. The parade started late because a wheel of the Queen's float fell off and it took time to put it back on and cover it so it wouldn't show through the decorations. Francine Goodman was still the Queen of the May and still the prettiest girl in the neighborhood, and even though she had a quick

temper, she could be a good sport and laugh when things went wrong, showing her nice even teeth and fingertip dimples. The band had to wait for Percy Hilikan to come and lead it and he was late. Nobody liked Percy because of his sissy gestures and big horn spectacles but he could lead the band and play his cornet at the same time which nobody else could. The boys kept yelling for him in front of his houses Percy, get finished with your milk bottle, yoo hoo Percival, now slap my bare wrist, oh Percy dear can you not hear the party waits till you appear - and things like that, until his mother told them to keep still if they wanted him to come downstairs, which he did after they stopped. He pretended not to hear the boos and cries but went straight to the head of the parade, lifted his stick, tapped his foot and began. The procession stepped out. They took the long way to the park and the policemen were very nice about stopping the traffic for them and making wagons and cars keep to the sides of the street while the parade marched down the middle of the street. It turned out to be a fine day for the whole neighborhood. The May Pole went up for the dancers, the older boys had their basketball game, there were races and prizes and basket lunches under trees and everyone looked bigger and older than a year ago. Lots of strangers and visitors came to watch them. Percy made the band play three times, calling the boys together with his shrill penny whistle and leading them with his sissy hands.

And the May Party became a part of that spring as surely as the air and green of trees and silk plaid dress and all that made that spring a fixed time in her memory. Then sweet potato time and halavah and charlotte russe and jelly apples became frosted sticks and pink lemonade and eskimo pies and ice cream sodas, and the street sounds and the street cries grew louder and longer lasting and soon everybody was talking about summer, and the nights grew warmer

and more friendly with voices coming through the windows from the yard where people sat on fire-escapes talking and looking out at stars, and the house which was such a grateful place in winter with its sense of warmth and walled-in safety became, suddenly, just a place of walls and ceiling and floor. While the world outside whispered and twinkled and smelled of lovely rain dust, and the bed perspired and the legs kicked and ached and no one knew what was the matter or what you wanted and why you tossed in your sleep and dreamed unremamberable things, not even Beatrice who complained she was burning and felt her body stretching to a little larger measure and listened and sighed and wished she knew not what, though vaseline and talcum powder and a cold wet handkerchief helped a little and the shape of mama bending over her was comforting and familiar.

June was as hot and still as January had been windy and cold. Everybody sat around saying it was impossible to draw a breath of fresh air or do anything else but drink cold drinks and perspire. Nobody wanted to cook, nobody wanted to eat, nobody wanted to go anywhere or do anything, nobody even felt like talking. Fans multiplied by the dozen, Japanese fans made of lacy paper over thin fluted sticks, homemade fans out of pleated newspaper sheets, cardboard fans picturing an advertisement. The children ran about looking for souvenirs, free with store purchases of almost every kind and amount. The street became a crowded playground. Chalk marks appeared on every square of sidewalk, the girls wanting to play double dutch, the boys wanting to play ball. Hoop rolling, potsy, red rover, wolf are you ready, jacks, roller skating, tops, marbles, tag, stoop ball, follow the leader, rattlesnake, ring around a rosy, bluebell, puss in the corner, try and catch - the street groaned under its burden of noise, heat and games. And then the day arrived when they all took up the chant, no more pencils, no more books, no more teachers and their saucy looks....

Papa got them off early, having bought tickets and reserved accommodations in advance. They were going to Woodridge Farm, a country boarding house in the Catskill Mountains. Mr. Schumann had recommended it as an ideal place for a modest and healthful vacation. The farmer, Sam Goodfield, was a muscular fellow, about thirty, with coarse wispy hair. A quiet fellow, a hard worker, but one who could see the advantage of taking in summer guests to make the farm pay. Papa asked him to look after the family's comfort.

If it's a little extra here and there, go ahead, I'll take care of it. Here, take this to start with.

Sam demurred, saying all the rooms were simple and clean, the meals wer homelike; he didn't think there would be any extras. But papa insisted he take the money as a pledge of confidence, to help him get started, he said. Afterwards, Mr. Schumann laughed and told papa that his old friend Goodfield probably had more money than the two of them put together, and why not, the old man always worked hard, lived a simple and quiet life, saved his money and made a success.

Bought a piece of land, built his own house, raised his own food, had no rent or overhead to worry about, no big expenses for entertainment or clothes, gave his children a humble education - believe me, he's no fool, Berger. And Mr. Schumann sighed, wondering if he had been as wise.

Mama packed the trunk full, as usual preferring her own sheets, pillows, quilt covers and towels. Ben wanted to take his bicycle along, but mama silenced him in quick order; they had enough to take along without the bicycle.

Next you'll be wanting to move the whole neighborhood to the country, she retorted. Why not take the sled, too? Ben sulked, worried about leaving his prize possession behind. What if it was stolen? What if it rusted and aged for being unused? Finally, papa promised to have it stored.

Now pop, I don't want it thrown in any old corner with a lot of junk, said Ben. Have them hoist it up on chains, carefully, I don't want it all scratched, in that way the tires can have a rest.

Everyone managed to sneak a few things into the trunk when mama wasn't looking. She packed two large valises with drugs and toilet articles and other things she thought vaguely might come in useful and handy. For days she was busy sewing, mending, buying, cleaning, camphoring, lining drawers and shelves with tar paper, putting covers on furniture and lamps - By the time they were ready to leave, she was worn out. And it wasn't until she arrived, unpacked and fi ed the drawers, tested the beds, explored the corridors, toilet and bath, made acquaintance with the kitchen, living-room, staff and guests, that mama began to relax.

It was a nice big farm with a barn and hayloft and wagon and cows and chickens and horses and a river down back of the house and long winding roads and wide fields and low mountains all around and a grassy lawn with tables and benches and a friendly porch with rocking chairs and an indoor playroom for the children on rainy days and another room for the grown-ups with a victrola and records and easy chairs and magazines and newspapers and wicker sofa and card table and folding chairs and a general lobby with a piano and writing desk and wooden telephone box that you cranked and rang up for operator, and it was just as comfortable and pleasant a farm as Mr. Schuman had said it would be.

Mama met another Mrs. Berger there, a stout, red-haired woman who was very friendly. She had a large family but only the two youngest were with her for the summer. She spoke of her children with great affection and referred to her husband as her good darling papa. Beatrice liked Mrs. Red Berger - she laughed easily and seemed very kind. She had a broad lap and no child was refused a

place on it to escape from tears, disappointments and troubles. Beatrice came there frequently. Sometimes she brought along her bead work and daisy chains and cut out dolls and the two of them sat and played together happily, for hours. Sometimes, she watched Mrs. Berger play solitaire, patiently sorting and laying out the cards until they came out right. Beatrice wished Mrs. Berger's son Marvin were a little older so that she could play with him. Jane was Addie's age. By the end of the second week however, there were enough children of all ages to go around and they all had their own friends.

Daisy was a lame girl, nine years old. She seemed lonely, shy. Beatrice made Daisy her best friend. She was a slim girl, about a head taller than Beatrice, with sad eyes and a limp left leg. The two were always together, walking or swinging or bathing in the river. Mama didn't like Beatrice to spend so much time with Daisy, although she felt sorry for her and said it must be hard on her poor mother, a widow. Daisy's mother was very nice looking and sociable, everyone called her Fan. She was always thinking up good-time ideas, like a barn dance or a hay ride or a hike or a picnic. But mama thought Beatrice should play with the other children. After all, she said, Daisy is too old for you; you should have friends your own age. Because mama couldn't come right out with it and say, she's a cripple and I don't want you to play with her all the time. And Beatrice couldn't tell mama that she liked playing with Daisy just because she was nine years old and treated her like a real friend. It made her feel older, bigger - more Addie's equal. Now when Addie went off with her friends to share secrets, Beatrice could wander off with Daisy, pretending that they had secrets, too. She didn't feel like such a baby this summer and it seemed to her that even Addie's friends treated her with more respect, as though she

were a big girl.

One day she came on a group of them alongside the road. Addie was there, talking and laughing. One of the girls was reading aloud a letter she had in her hands, and at every other word, she stopped. The girls prompted her with cries and shrieks of laughter - spell it out, Ray! how does she expect you to pronounce that one! go on, what's next! boy, she must have copied that right out of the dictionary! The reader proceeded with stops, stutters, shouts and sneers. None of them knew what the letter was about. The writer was a friend of the girl reading, someone who had just graduated from elementary school to high school. The girls wanted it read again, crowding around the letter to see the writing, the long syllabled words, each trying to discover a phrase. You should see her, such airs, oh me, oh my! What's she going to do when she graduates from high school? Be a walking encyclopedia! Beatrice wondered why they laughed if they didn't know the meaning of the words; she thought the girl who had written the letter must be very smart to know such big words. She decided the girls were stupid and jealous. She wished she could write a letter like that and know a lot of words. She watched Addie's face and then saw Addie watching hers. They were just showing-off, all of them, each one trying to act smarty and make fun of the girl who knew more than they did. Beatrice turned away and left them, frowning. If that's what it meant to be a big girl, it wasn't much. Why did Addie play with such silly girls? She found Daisy and they went down to the river. Daisy showed her how to tell if you liked butter; she held a buttercup under Beatrice's chin and it made a yellow light. Daisy liked butter, too. They laughed, tickling each other with the delicate flower. They talked about what made the grass green, Daisy saying it must be the sun and Beatrice saying it

must be the rain because the grasses in the water were even greener than the grass on the bank. It was fun lying down and looking up at the sky through tree branches. They played games with their eyes. Beatrice said, if you squeeze your eyes tight, then the sky becomes green and the leaves become blue. Daisy said that was true and then they began looking for faces and animals in the shapes of the boughs. The butterflies flew all around them.

Her seventh birthday almost passed unnoticed. It was noon when mama suddenly remembered what day it was. Beatrice looked surprised. It was a day so much like other days that she could hardly believe it was her birthday. But if she was a year older, then why wasn't she having a party? The idea that the day was no different from other days made her feel cheated. Then Mrs. Red Berger drew Beatrice into her lap and spanked her seven times, adding one hearty slap for good measure, and promised her a big birthday cake that afternoon. Mama kissed her seven times and made the eighth kiss last longest, saying they would have a party on Saturday when papa came up. Ben came running to the porch at the sound of the milk bell, learned what was going on, and gave Beatrice a French kiss, saying, c'mon, you be first on line today, and he made Farmer Sam hand the first cup of warm milk to Beatrice. She had four cups to start her new year growing right away. At lunch someone started singing Happy Birthday to You and soon a chorus of voices was clamoring, stand up, stand up, stand up and show us your face, your face, and Beatrice popped up and down quickly, blushing hard, while spoons clattered and feet stamped. Later, Daisy's mother treated the two girls to ice cream when the wagon joggled up the path, tinkling a bell. Then Addie said she would let Beatrice have one of her dresses to be made over for her and Beatrice spent a long time deciding which dress she would

like to have. Ben said, I ain't got nothing for you, Bee, I forgot, but you can have anything I got, and he emptied his pockets inside out to let her pick something. She found a nice immie and kissed Ben for giving it to her. Then he said, I'll take you for a nice long bike ride first thing we get back, how's that? And Beatrice said, all right, Ben, feeling happy. Somehow, she didn't mind not getting any presents; it didn't seem to matter in the country. But at five o'clock, her chocolate birthday cake was ready and Mrs. Berger gave all the children a slice of it with their milk and that was lots of fun. Beatrice had two pieces and gave extras to Addie and Ben and Daisy and a few other friends until all the cake was gone. It was good cake and everybody enjoyed eating it.

Silver Lake was a place everybody talked about going to. Usually, the grownups went there for a special outing. Papa and mama went one Sunday and took Addie along. When Beatrice found out, she was angry because they had left her behind. One of the waiters found her crying outside the dining-room because they hadn't returned by lunch time and then one of the new guests, a lady called Millie, came along and he told her what happened and they started talking and soon they made a date for tomorrow because that was the waiter's day off and they told Beatrice they would take her to Silver Lake with them, so she stopped crying, having meanwhile decided they had fallen in love, although the waiter did not look like a man who could be a sweetheart and Millie seemed kind of old and ugly with her big buck teeth. But the more they chatted, the more she liked them and she thought it was very nice of them to want to take her along. They were going to hitch hike and then go rowing on the lake and they would take a box lunch for the three of them.

Mama and papa didn't like the idea of her going off with the waiter and a perfect stranger. When Millie came over to talk to them, mama said it was too much of a responsibility to take such a young child on an all-day trip but Millie said that mama could trust her and besides she didn't want to disappoint Beatrice since she had set her heart on seeing Silver Lake. So mama and papa consented, just to be polite.

Beatrice wouldn't let Addie talk about Silver Lake. I'm going tomorrow, she said, I don't want to hear about it, and she put her fingers in her ears. Addie said, you're crazy if you think papa'll let you go; you're too young to go anywhere by yourself. Oh yeah, said Beatrice, well, I'm not going by myself, so there! Go on, said Addie, they're just fooling you; why should they take you; you're nobody to them. We'll see, smarty, said Beatrice, and she tucked herself under the covers away from Addie. Then Addie pulled the covers over to her side of the bed and wrapped herself in them so that Beatrice couldn't pull them back. An angry tug started between them and Beatrice yelled beyond the wall to mama's room. Then Addie let go and when mama came in, she scolded Beatrice for hogging the whole cover and leaving Addie to shiver in her nightgown. Then Beatrice got mad and threw the whole cover on Addie and said, I suppose it's all right if I freeze to death; that's what she did before till you came in; now I get all the blame. You started it, said Addie. And another fight began which ended with mama dividing the blame and the covers between them. Ben heard nothing, his entire attention absorbed by the new Frank Merriwell serial that papa had brought him from the city. Only when mama said, lights out, and took the book away from him did he realize where he was. Aw, ma, just another second till I finish the chapter, he protested. Addie said no, she couldn't sleep with the lights on. So another fight started, until papa came in to find out what all

the noise was about. Ben proved he had just a few more pages to read, though he was mad at mama for losing his place, and papa told Addie not to be so selfish, and Beatrice said, that's Addie for you all over, and mama said, you see, that's what I have all week, that's my vacation, and papa said, will you stop it, all of you, I come up here weekends for a rest, if you don't behave yourselves, I'll take you right back with me. So the light was put out, anyway, and Ben had to go to sleep without finishing his chapter, and whenmama and papa were safely out of hearing, a whisper fight started which lasted until they were all too tired to say more. But in the morning there was more trouble because mama decided that Silver Lake was out. Again Millie was brought in to help, and papa, who could never resist a lady and hated tearful scenes, besides, ended by giving in.

In a little while the waiter arrived on the porch with a lunch prepared by him for the outing. Beatrice was radiant, despite breakfast indigestion, and she skipped merrily ahead of her two guardians to the main cross-road, the waiter and the lady laughing and talking to improve their acquaintance. Beatrice pretended to be busy looking for roadside flowers, remembering there were times when children should be seen and not heard. Two cars whizzed by without stopping and Beatrice decided to try her luck on the next car. It turned out to be a truck. She began to wave her arms and jump and shout while the truck was still a long way off. When it finally slowed to a halt the waiter asked the driver if he could give them a lift to Silver Lake and there was a smiling, sure, hop on. The driver swung Beatrice up next to him and the waiter helped Millie alongside. They were crowded but the waiter said he liked it better that way and the driver winked at him and laughed, and then the truck went rolling along the road again, with them inside, looking down and ahead. The truckdriver and the

waiter had to shout above the motor roar to hear each other and Millie pressed Beatrice's hand, her big teeth flashing happily as the countryside flew by. The down hills gave Beatrice excited little thrills; she felt her stomach rise up and fall with a long drawn ah. The driver must have heard her because he called to her here-we-go every time they reached a down slope and Beatrice caught her breath as the truck started to drop to the bottom at what seemed to her great speed. And suddenly they saw the big lake shining off to one side like a flat round mirror, purplish blue with gold thread, and Beatrice hated to get down and lose the picture of it she had had up there. They goodbyed and waved to the driver, then followed the side road to the boat house.

By the time they reached it the sun was almost overhead. They felt thirsty, hot. Beatrice wished they could go in swimming and shivered at the thought of entering so much cold looking water all at one time. It was different from the ocean, somehow bigger, because you could see the far curved shore extending on either side of you, for that very reason. The ocean, being endless, became the strip of water at the sand's edge; its beginning was its end, a few yards in front of the waves that swam up and floated to shore. While Silver Lake was a calm surface, with any point a beginning that widened farther out and out, deeper and deeper, until you reached the other side, ending at a new beginning point, because there was nothing to stop you from going on and on, as you could see from the gleaming boats that bobbed near and far, doing just that. The thrill of the water beneath and around her was entire, encompassing the whole. For a while she sat very still on the prow seat of the rowboat, catching Millie's smiles behind the waiter's back. She watched him row, long even oar strokes that cut the water soundlessly. The small pier receded until it became just another point on the lake shore, with its boat house blue and white dwarfed by

trees. Then they were far away, surrounded by water, floating over rippling swords of sunshine that flashed and darkened as the boat moved along, carrying its shadow ahead.

Mama had made her wear a hat. Through the plaited straw she could feel her hair perspire and where the ribbon tied beneath her chin there was a hot wet crease that gathered stringy pieces of black on her finger. Cautiously, she dropped one hand over the side of the boat; at the first touch, her hand sprang back to her lap. The soft sensation clung to her fingertips deliciously; they felt like new fingers, not hers at all. And then she dipped them again to play piano notes on the cool keys, loving the silky chords, the sudden waving of water to wrist, the light breeze circling her arm. The sky drew its blue close, enclosing her laughter like the rim of a glass. The lake was a glass of water, full to the brim, and her joy held it delicately poised so that not one drop should spill. She thought of the Fairy Soap she used for her bath; like that she was, a fairy floating on top of the water, and the bubbles washed all around her. After a while she noticed the boat nearing a green arch, dense where the branches held it over a sandy cove. Lunch, cried the waiter, swooping his oars back along the locks and letting the boat swell towards land. When they came alongside the bushes, he sprang out and pulled the rowboat after him; it scraped against sand and then stuck. While he helped Millie out, Beatrice scrambled ashore. From the narrow inlet where they stood, the lake seemed like a vast slope of water, topped by sky and bottomed by trees, itself the shimmering slope between. How lovely it was! And Beatrice laughed again, hugging her joy to her. She breathed deep the smell of the woods, the sun-soaked, water-cooled green

of woods till she thought her lungs would burst. There was an ache in her back, her neck burned, her stomach hurt. She ran a short way up a grass flailed path, seeing the black trunks of trees climbing to lighter browns along boughs and upper bark, roofing out the sky. The ground was so soft underfoot, it was like walking barefoot over a new carpet. Bird calls whistled and startled the still treetops; Beatrice could not see the birds; they seemed near, then far. Millie and the waiter came looking for her and found her staring up. They carried the lunch basket and blanket along the foot trail between black trunks over mossy leaves until they reached an opening where the sun fell yellow in a room of green bushy walls. There were signs of former visitors: a charred spot in the ground, an old bottle, a tin can, newspaper. The waiter spread the blanket and set the basket on it. Millie took his hand and dropped down, being careful to tuck her legs under her dress. Beatrice sat facing them across the blanket, tossing her hair through her fingers to air the warm roots. Her mouth was hungry but her stomach seemed sluggish. She hardly tasted her sandwich and had no interest in the fruits, salad or cake. They were surprised but did not insist on her eating. After lunch the waiter stretched out on the blanket, and Millie propped herself against a tree, to rest. Beatrice wandered around, wondering why she felt so queer and tired. She plucked listlessly at the frail twigs along the bushes, snapped leaves in half, stooped to examine pebbles, her interest suddenly dulled. When the waiter disappeared to go for a swim, Millie called her over and she lay down with her head in Millie's lap. While Millie stroked her hair, she fell asleep. When she awoke, the waiter was standing over her, flipping wet fingers on her face, his swimming suit dripping over hairy thighs. Then he and Millie started to chase among the trees, throwing leaves at each other.

Beatrice just sat and watched them, feeling dazed. She had to use a toilet and didn't know what to do. She strained herself against the return journey, waiting. Leisurely, Millie gathered up the scraps into the basket and folded the blanket, while the waiter went off to dress. Neither of them seemed to notice her discomfort. The waiter wanted to row about on the lake for another hour but Millie asked Beatrice if she would like to go back and Beatrice said yes, so they headed in the same direction from which they had come and it seemed the boathouse would never get any nearer and nothing else mattered, not the water or the reeds or the sun clouds or the shore trees. But finally they arrived and the rowboat rocked alongside the pier front and they went up the small ladder and over the wooden dock towards the road and then luckily a car came along and gave them a lift part of the way back to the farm but they still had a long way to walk and Beatrice thought she would die of cramps, then she saw the bend in the road which led to the farmhouse and she knew she couldn't wait any longer and she told them that she would run ahead and meet them back at the house. But as soon as she turned the bend she began looking for a hiding place behind some bushes. No sooner did she unloosen her drawers, she heard their voices. So she jumped up and began running again, trying to fix her belt as she ran, and oh it was terrible, terrible, because it happened anyway and she thought she would die. Never had such a thing happened to her before. Terrified, she looked back to see if they had seen, if they knew. She couldn't run fast any more. The seat of her drawers hung heavily, threateningly. The farmhouse was ahead, coming closer with every step. If only she didn't meet anyone! And what would Mama say? Mama was playing cards on the front porch. Now Beatrice rushed past with a hello, ma, I'm back, and ran upstairs. There, she placed

herself behind the trunk, opened the window and yelled to mama to please come upstairs quick. She dared not move, dared not find Addie or Ben in her room.

Where did you disappear so fast, why didn't you stop, how did you get so red in the face? Mama came towards the trunk, her eyes searching, worried. Beatrice didn't cry; she had to tell her story clearly, quietly, so that only mama would hear it. When she was finished, mama breathed a sigh of relief and even started to laugh. So what, she said, you little foolish darling. Why didn't you tell Millie you had to go? Such a child! Well, come on out of there, no one's going to bite you.

Oh ma, I smell so bad, she whispered, I hate to look.

Nonsense, mama said, it's natural, isn't it? There was no one in Beatrice's room but she wanted to go to mama's room anyway, so mama took some fresh clothes and they went there. You excuse yourself, you take Millie aside and explain. After all, it's not a crime. Everybody has to go. Why, you could have made yourself sick. Especially in an emergency. No wonder you looked so feverish. Ooh, you foolish children, how many things you have to learn.

Suddenly, Beatrice remembered that other summer. Do you remember, mama, on my birthday? They laughed over it, remembering the green stains on the white shoes, the wet circle on the rug in front of the victrola.

When she emerged it was in her best Sunday dress and socks and shoes, her hair parted neatly down the middle and straight across her brows and ears, with a stiff white bow clipped on top of her head to give her height and dignity. No one had seen and no one would know. It was a smiling promise between them and they went downstairs to thank Millie for the lovely outing and to tell everyone what a good time she had had at Silver Lake.

That summer she learned a lot of dirty jokes and songs. The children

pointed at dogs, roosters, cows, horses and birds. They poked fingers at each other, tickling and screaming. Papa had a pencil and mama had a book. They shocked themselves and ran off laughing, their ears tingling with their own daring. Johnny and Mary was a favorite parody; they greeted each other with, what? and the answer came twat twat. Foul words made them giggle hardest; they took turns saying them. It usually started with someone speaking behind his hand into his neighbor's ear; then as the word travelled around from hand to ear, the giggles and the whispers mounted until the words flew across to all ears simultaneously. The list grew until it included every bodily function. At first the group included boys and girls, ranging in age from four year old Stanley to twelve year old Margaret, but gradually it broke apart into younger children and older children, pairs and trios and foursomes.

Beatrice went off with Daisy, both of them agreed that that was nothing and just plain silly though there were things Daisy told her that she didn't understand. She didn't say so because once she had asked Daisy what that meant and Daisy had looked at her in surprise, with a strange, suspicious look. So after that, she laughed when she was supposed to and made believe she knew all about it. She would roll her eyes, give Daisy a special squeeze and cover her face with both hands. Daisy asked if she was getting hair there and Beatrice pretended it was all very shocking and secretive. Then Daisy said, that's what happens when you start getting ready for you know what, and immediately she started whispering about the you know what, saying it was so disgusting and dirty and that it happened only to girls when they got to be of age and that soon she Daisy would have it, too, and wasn't it awful, and she seemed terribly excited about it and said, look how I'm growing here, do you notice how the boys look at me? And it was true, her dress was beginning to show two points and Beatrice blushed harder than ever. Then one day she went to Daisy's room and Daisy's mother

called, come in, and told her to hurry, close the door, because they weren't dressed yet. Daisy caught her eye and smiled and then Beatrice saw hair there. Her face must have been white, her eyes round and staring because Daisy's mother said, what's the matter, haven't you ever seen your sister or mother naked, but Daisy hurriedly answered, of course she has, what do you think? Beatrice said nothing, unable to remember Addie naked with hair. The sight threw whispered words and songs into a new setting. Her silence didn't leave her all afternoon; she was bewildered, dismayed. Why, she couldn't say. She made up a lie to satisfy Daisy. He and Addie had a fight, she said. I'm glad I have no sisters, Daisy said. Beatrice hardly noticed her friend; she felt alone, withdrawn.

It was Addie who grew suspicious; she took to dressing and undressing in private. What are you always staring for, she asked angrily. She grew self-conscious and began complaining to mama. Mama got mad, saying she never knew two sisters who couldn't get along the way they couldn't.

Why, my sister and I took baths together without bathing suits, she said, and now you have to hide from each other. What's the matter with you two children? She refused to pay attention to such ridiculous modesty.

Beatrice began to examine herself minutely, looking for breast signs and hair growth. She wondered if there was something wrong with her. One day she asked mama in private why she wasn't growing.

What do you mean, mama asked in surprise.

You know, get bigger all over, Beatrice answered.

Mama started to laugh. What's the matter, aren't you tall enough? Beatrice murmured a vague reply. Goodness, you've put on about five pounds this summer. You're a nice healthy child, rosy cheeks, chubby arms and legs, well built and

solid - what more do you want?

Beatrice flattened her hands on her chest and rubbed them up and down. I'm so funny here, she said.

At that mama gasped, drew her close and rocked her in her arms. Sh, baby, don't talk like that. Why, you're only seven years old, just a few weeks ago. And to me it's like yesterday you were born. Believe me, you'll grow up fast enough without hurrying it. Don't you like to be mama's baby? And mama's eyes were wet, her voice choked. Beatrice couldn't understand why or what had hurt mama or how, but she kissed mama passionately and vowed that she would always be mama's baby. And suddenly she hated Daisy and Daisy's mother.

For the next few days she absented herself from Daisy. Instead, she followed Ben around; he didn't seem to mind. She hung back when there were boy stunts going on. But sometimes they sat around and just talked and then she came closer and stayed near Ben. He wouldn't let them chase her away. She wasn't doing any harm, he said. Once he got into a fight with a big boy because the big boy used a dirty word and Ben told him to cut it out, his sister was there, and the big boy said so what. But he wasn't so tough with his fists as with his mouth and Ben showed him what quick. After that, the boys were more careful; swearing in front of girls was met with a nix or a none-of-that look that meant danger. Since Ben wasn't a sissy, the boys respected his kid sister feeling; besides Beatrice didn't bother them. She tried to be good and make them feel she looked up to them. She liked to listen to them tell stories about cowboy westerns in the movies, about books they had read. Captain Kidd and his buried treasure was a favorite. The boys talked about where the treasure might be buried, how it might be found, what they would do if they found it. Schemes were invented for great adventures. They divided into scout units, each to hunt in a given direction

Beatrice followed Ben to the river bank, eager to help with her rake and shovel. Daisy came down to join her and Beatrice told her what they were searching for. The two got busy digging, and the boys left them to go for a swim back of the rocky falls. A few minutes later, Beatrice gave a wild shriek and started yelling Ben at the top of her lungs. Daisy looked on in amazement as Beatrice scooped coins from the ground. A curious, eager crowd collected, but Beatrice huddled over her booty, arms encircled, yelling, it's mine, I found it, no halvies, Ben, Ben! Till Ben came running with wet feet and hair, wrapped in a towel. Everyone made way as he hovered over Beatrice's discovery. There was a dollar and eighty-six cents worth of old pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters. Ohs, gees, goshes and whews accompanied the count, then, everybody scuttled around to search for more. Ben was all grins. What a kid sister! Captain Kidd may have buried treasure but it took a girl to find it! He took her back to the house proudly, patting her shoulder, praising her, advising her to go hunting by herself - she was lucky. The coins travelled between them, the old dates and figures rubbed into daylight again. Mama was just as startled and pleased as they were. She said it proved there must have been a poker party down there even years ago. Was the money good, Ben asked.

Why not, mama said, U. S. money, I wouldn't mind finding a barrel full. It might be worth even more because it's old. So they took it to farmer Sam to see what he thought.

Nah, he said, I got lots like them, look - and he took out an old change purse and showed them pennies and dimes just like those they had found. Maybe I dropped them out of my pants one time when I was down there working. He laughed

and told Beatrice to have a good time spending it. It disappointed her a little, but after all, a dollar and eighty-six cents was better than nothing, especially since she had found it, so Ben said what's the diff?

For days afterward, the children wandered up and down the side of the river looking for buried treasure. Mama told Beatrice to save it, it was luck money, but it was hard to resist testing it out to see if it would be accepted. It was. Nobody seemed to care that it was old. As the ice cream seller said, a penny's a penny and a nickel's a nickel, no matter how new or old they are. The money dribbled away, but the excitement of that day remained long after it was gone.

The river was the scene for another eventful happening that summer. Somewhere the rumor started that there was a snake in it. One woman swore she had seen it and felt it move under her feet. But since there was no other place to cool off and nothing had happened in the river so far, everyone thought it was a joke. The children tumbled about yelling, look out, here comes the snake, and then splashed water at each other. Addie, who was afraid of the water anyhow because she couldn't swim, pretended she didn't go in because she believed the story. Farmer Sam was often to be seen moving about in high boots, studying the rocky falls, inspecting the wooden bridge that crossed it, examining the dam at the lower end where the river became a creek. And it was Farmer Sam himself who decided to clear the river and let fresh water in. Everyone rushed madly from the water, yelling The Snake, The Snake! A woman fainted as soon as she was far enough away to fall on the grass. The children lined up on the bank to watch Farmer Sam remove the dam, chanting, Farmer Sam, the dam, the dam, kill the snake with a rake, rake, rake! And slowly the water drained out, becoming muddier and muddier towards the bottom. At last they saw a long, rippling movement. The snake, there it is! Instinctively, everyone moved back from the

edge. Farmer Sam climbed down, axe in hand, and sank knee high in his tall rubber boots. He was smiling, yet serious, his brown eyes flashing in the sun as he waded in. It was an enormous snake, long and thick as a pole gone soft with twisting curves. The axe flew down, gashed, lifted and crashed again. The giant lashed out, tail and head separating into two angry contortions. Everyone screamed, he's still alive, he's still alive! A ribbon of blood widened over the mud. Farmer Sam leaped to one side, hurried forward and let fly again, a powerful blow. Mud spattered up from his hands as the snake flipped out from under the axe. Atta boy, Sammie! Let him have it between the eyes! Crack him hard! Knock him for a loop! One for me! Cries and cheers urged him on. And at last the severed creature writhed to its separate deaths, each part struggling defiantly. Mama felt disgust and pity; she refused to allow the children to remain. What is there to see, she said, it's dead. Gradually, the others trooped back to the house, fashioning a new legend. The snake was a mile long, stronger than a hundred men, bigger than a tree trunk, it was a thousand year old monster that slept in the mud and waited till it was hungry before dragging its victim down, drowning. Farmer Sam was a mighty champion, the bravest man in the whole world. They could hardly wait to go swimming again.

That night Beatrice dreamed of snakes and flames and drowning by night and sinking in quicksand and the more she struggled the deeper she sank, the mud filling her eyes and ears and nose and mouth, and the snake waiting for her quietly at the bottom, and there was nobody there to save her, until mama appeared with an axe, looking like Farmer Sam, with a moustache and high rubber boots, and then they were on the grassy slope of the river, surrounded by friends, and

everybody cheered because the river was full of water again, and then they all went in bathing and splashed in the sunshine and Beatrice was a hero, brave and wonderful, and the snake was dead.

The weather remained fine into September, and even mama said it was a shame they had to go back to the city. The cool nights and mornings and the clear, sunny days agreed with all of them; they ate well, slept well, felt well and looked well. In the afternoons, the children went berry picking, competing for pies. Beatrice loved the warm smell along the hedges of the fields where they found the blue and black and red berries. The thorns were sharp but her fingers soon learned to reach for the fruit and avoid them. She enjoyed the sweet and bitter tastes of nibbled berries in her mouth. The hours seemed to fly past, leaving her a quart of berries as a reward for being perspired and tired. The fruit they couldn't eat went into the farm kitchen and came out as jams and pies and preserves. There were blueberries, black berries, raspberries, wild currants, gooseberries - while in the orchards the trees swelled with apples, pears, peaches, plums, many of which were either underripe or else already rotten on the ground, bored by birds and maggots. Three good pieces of whole fruit was considered a fair average for a morning's romp under the trees. A few daring boys managed to steal into the upper branches to shake out their loot. Beatrice would look up into the leaves, wishing she could be a bird. She grasped the trunk and tried to set her feet against the barky scales rasped beneath her shoes and roughed against her hands. She felt awkward, heavy, and watched with envy how the birds flew from tree to tree. How nice it would be to have a house in the tree, to have a secret door with a roof and a floor - how nice to be hidden by leaves and safe - She found a young apple in the grass, polished it on her

sleeve till it shone, examined it for specks and flaws, then bit deeply - it soured in her mouth and had a worm inside. She spat and threw it away. How could you tell the good from the bad, when they all looked alike? She liked bananas better, the sealed yellow ones, that stripped and looked smooth from top to bottom. They were always good. She ran to the house to ask for a banana.

The barn - before she left, she wanted to see that, what it was like inside. Farmer Sam never allowed the children to play there. When he wasn't working there, he kept the huge doors bolted and locked. Beatrice knew there was hay inside, high stacks that reached almost to the rafters. Would he let her just look, she asked? He pinched her cheek and smiled, leading the way. She held his hand, pleased with his favor. He stopped off at the chicken house to slop a pail of feed into the yard enclosure. Beatrice watched him through the mesh fence. The chickens ran and pecked all around him; he had to shoo them off to make way for his feet. They paid no attention to her, much as she clucked and called, pinching her fingers as though she had something for them. Next, they went to the milk shed, where the handiman was scrubbing the floor with a long brush. Farmer Sam gave him some orders, then took Beatrice along the stalls to see the cows and bins and water troughs. Beatrice liked the big cows, their still eyes, their fat bodies, the full udders with their pink hanging fingers. How much milk came from them! She asked Farmer Sam if she could pat the cows, to show that she loved them. He laughed and lifted her up. The cow's head moved, nudging towards her. She giggled, slightly afraid, then stroked the big face as though it were a baby's. Nice cow, she said, good cow, pretty cow. She thought of its warm milk, the sweet taste it gave her daily, and her hands thanked it tenderly. After that they went to the barn. It was dark for a moment, except

for the light from the tiny windows under the gabled roof. Birds darted out from the beams, fluttering overhead. The smell here was different, like grass dust. Odds and ends of machinery stood about on the floor. The hay leaned up to the slanty ceiling along wide platforms. What fun it would be to play up there.

Why won't you let us, she asked. Farmer Sam pointed to upper doors above the lofts and explained what would happen if a child should slip off the hay and land on the ground outside the barn. It sounded exciting, more like fun than danger.

What about a party then, she said. He looked around and scratched his head.

Well, I guess the place could be cleaned up for a dance all right.

A barn dance, Beatrice spread the news all over the farm. There was no time to lose; vacation was almost over.

It was Daisy's mother, Fan, who arranged that it should take place the last Saturday of the season. A barn dance and mock marriage. Lanterns were hung over the doorways and between posts. The wooden floor was cleared of machinery and scrubbed. Everyone was to wear costumes. For the mock marriage Fan would be the groom and Farmer Sam the bride. There was to be a hired band, entertainment by local talent, games and refreshments. Beatrice went about enjoying the plans for this party which she had started. No one seemed to remember or care who had started it. When she reminded anyone she was told to run along like a good/little girl. As the big night approached, she began to have misgivings. When she asked Daisy if her mother was fixing a costume for her, Daisy shrugged and said, she's too busy to think of me. The unpleasant thought rose out of hiding that children would not be allowed to come to the dance. When she heard talk about the decorations going up at the barn and what a grand party it was going to be,

Beatrice grew quiet and pale.

And at the last minute in her room, Beatrice gave vent to the outrage within her. It was unfair, it was wrong, it was worse than criminal. If it hadn't been for her, there would have been no party! Wasn't it she who had talked to Farmer Sam, she who had gotten him to promise to fix up the barn so that there could be a dance there? Whose idea was it, if not hers? Who was Fan that she should boss the whole affair? Why should the grownups have everything and the children nothing? Why couldn't they have some fun, too, on the last Saturday night of the summer vacation? No, she wouldn't listen, she wouldn't go to sleep, she didn't care what papa would do to her! Red in the face and trembling all over, she hardly knew what mama replied or why Addie and Ben got excited as soon as mama left. And when Addie told her that they were going to sneak out afterwards and see the whole show on the sly, she was not much gratified.

I was going to do that anyway, she answered resentfully, clinging to her dark sense of indignation with stubbornness of pride. Having to steal a peep at the fun from outside like any common thief or passing tramp! It took her a long time to share their enthusiasm in the plan. Ben kept watch at the window from their darkened room and Addie listened behind the partly open door to know when it was safe to leave. Beatrice sulked on the bed, wondering what she could wear, if a mask would help. Everyone would know who the <u>child</u> was, even if she dressed as a boy, she would be the smallest one in the room. If only her legs were longer! She contemplated them in the dark, straining to reach the floor with the tips of her shoes. Being young, what good was that? How she hated to hear people tell her how wonderful it was to be a child; what liars they were to say they wished they were young once more! Ben motioned her to come to the

window, whispering that the band had arrived in a car. And there she forgot her grievance, feeling Ben's arm around her shoulder and Addie leaning over her. They would be the only children smart enough to leave the house and see everything. It gave her pleasure, knowing how smart they were. Ben thumbed his tie to his lips, Addie twisted her mouth with her fingers, both nervous. Beatrice's eyes strained towards the barn. Already, figures were gathering, voices and laughter mingling. There was a hysterical interruption.

That must be Fan said Beatrice, jealously following the small mannish figure in the top hat moving across the lawn.

O. K., Addie said, c'mon, let's go. She opened the door, peered out and stepped back quickly. Someone's leaving the bathroom, she whispered. They waited another minute, then tiptoed out one behind the other. There was no one in the hall. They ran to the stairway, slipped down, then hid around the corner of the porch as they heard steps approaching. A couple passed, cutting straight for the barn. Now the music started, a tuneful air. The three of them started towards it, moving slowly. A few men were smoking outside.

Let's go around to the back, behind the bushes, whispered Addie, we can look through the cracks.

But mama said we could sneak over, protested Ben.

I know. Sh.

Through the rear boards of the barn, rays of light slanted out. The three huddled together behind one of the larger cracks. The musicians were almost in front of them, the violinist smiling and nodding. How gay the lanterns looked, the festoons and streamers! Only a few couples were dancing. The rest were gathered around the false bride and groom, laughing and talking. Someone

walked across the floor carrying a bottle of soda and some paper cups.

I bet they have cats too, said Ben.

At the end of the dance, the drumsticks rolled and banged three times, and a voice cried, Ladies and gentlemen! The entertainment was about to begin. Everyone clapped. The people outside the barn came in, crowding for room in the doorway.

The three of them hurried around to the front in order to see better. They met mama on the way, looking for them.

Where have you been, she demanded, I thought you would wait for me! They were relieved to see her.

We were afraid people would see us, Addie said.

Afraid, of what I'd like to know, mama said, we've paid enough money all summer for you children to have some guest rights, too. I never saw so many strangers here before, and if they can come, why shouldn't you? I'd like to see anyone tell me different!

They were delighted at mama's attitude. Ben began to swagger, Addie bit her lips and pinched Beatrice, Beatrice felt sweetly revenged. They took their places in a corner of the large room near Mrs. Rod Berger. Some of the entertainment was fun: a comedian sang silly songs and did a few acrobatic flops. There was a vaudeville sketch on the theme of boy meets girl, falls in love, gets slapped for his pains, tries various wooing techniques, and at last conquers her foolish, feminine heart. Then came the finale, the mock marriage, which everyone thought was hilarious. They threw confetti and rice, applauded and cheered and made the rafters echo. Then mama took them home, assuring them that the whole thing had been a lot of noise with nothing to it.

Nothing, with nothing. For my part, they could have had all the children there. What else are they if not children? Such nonsense! She shook her head, but just the same, Beatrice wished she was old enough to make believe the way they did that they were enjoying themselves like children.

Papa came up on Sunday and said he had had a lot of work at the office and couldn't get up earlier. They told him about the mock marriage and he sniffed. Guess I didn't miss much, he said. Mama asked him how everything was at home and whether it was ready for her to come back to. What do you think, he grunted, and added, it's about time, too. Mama looked flattered. So you missed me, ha? Papa sniffed again, oh sure, missed you terribly. Maybe you've had enough of restaurants and good times to last you till next year, ha, teased mama. Maybe, said papa.

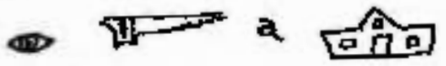
They stayed till Tuesday morning and left with the last guests. Farmer Sam drove them to the station and helped them check their bags and trunks through to New York. He swung Beatrice in the air and gave her a strong hug, asking if she would come back again next year. You bet, said Beatrice, but you have to promise me something. What, Sam asked goodnaturedly. She put her mouth to his ear, a barn dance for us. He nodded, laughing. But she wasn't through. A hay ride? Again he nodded, ponies, a toy room, a tree house, movies, lots of new children to play with, and - she remembered Ben - a great big ball field! Hey, he shouted, you want too much! Papa leaned out of the train window and chuckled. If you listen to her, you might as well buy yourself a brand new farm and start all over again. Everybody laughed, including Beatrice. How about making you my partner, Sam asked her. You bet, she said, my papa's rich. At

this, the train whistled, and he lifted her through the window. She called goodbye over and over, waving her hand and blowing kisses to everybody outside. She was too excited to remember how sorry she was to be leaving. It was a beautiful day, full of people, and the train seemed the only possible place to be. The country had had its summer share, it was time to leave. And then the train started and the station looked sadly deserted. In the train there was laughter, loud voices, movements along the aisle and between the seats. It's a long road to Tipperary,it's a long way to go - the song began and everybody joined in. Outside, the country sped by, already forgotten. Everybody was going home.

2A, 5B, 8A - the Fall swung into perspective swiftly. Now the teachers were Miss Johnson, Mrs. De Vries and Miss Pound. The school flag across the park became the morning's sign of every day, the streets and buildings the signs of afternoon. Gone were the fields, the orchards, the prospects of barn and river. There was a mischievous tang to the air, now cool with autumn, now light with frost. The sidewalks grew loud with skates. There was a spontaneous outburst, as though to assert that only the summer had passed, not its freedom. School discipline became severe: truancy, tardiness, the least offense was gravely punished. Classes were kept after school hours, parents were sent for, homework assignments were doubled and tripled. The children remained incorrigibly happy. They raced, shouted, broke all the health rules, thrived. Mended stockings, patched trousers and scuffed shoes soon took the place of the newly bought clothes. It took a few weeks and then the children became pupils, adjusted, pressed into place.

Beatrice returned to her fairy tale books, each week a different color. Came Saturday, she decided. Orange, red, yellow, blue green - the covers matched the names. It was a long time before she recognized that the stories were not always different. It hardly mattered. She loved them, loved the world they created. They were her only source of interest in a world otherwise drab and unbeautiful. Here was life ceaselessly renewed and refreshed. Cinderella was the pathetic Caroline, forever alive in her wheel chair, waiting for the fairy godmother to change her into a healthy child who could play as did all other children. Boredom was impossible, disillusion unknown. Here was justice, loyalty, reward and riches. The evils of sex and poverty banished. Only the good, the true, the beautiful remained. What could be better than reading? You took a whole day to do a small number of things: hours to eat, hours to sleep, hours to be in school - and you covered so little space, saw so few things. While in an hour's reading a lifetime could be crowded into the small area of a room where only your eyes traveled.

Mama complained. Always your nose in a book, what for, you'll go blind. When papa wasn't home, her book was propped on the table against the bread tray. When everyone went to sleep, she took the book to the bathroom and read till her mind dozed off. She would have taken the book to school if Miss Johnson hadn't confiscated every toy and personal belonging that had no business being there. If anyone should lay unfriendly hands on her book! Mama didn't dare touch it. Beatrice would cry, look out, your hands are wet, or some such thing, then seize it and carry it off. Once when she went to the library her favorite shelf was empty. They're out, the librarian told her, quietly, then said, but perhaps someone will bring one in soon. Beatrice sat down at a nearby reading

table to wait. On it, she found a queer book of pictures. I saw a house was written with three pictures and the letter a.  It became a game after she caught on. The librarian had to come up and whisper, not so loud, pointing her finger to her lips. Beatrice realized she had been reading aloud. A few children had come over to see what she was looking at.

That day she had to take home a substitute. The librarian suggested Peter Rabbit. Beatrice took it uncertainly; it didn't seem to have enough pictures in it and she didn't like chapters. But it turned out to be a book of short stories, really, because every chapter told something different. The only thing was that Peter Rabbit was in all the stories, along with some other animals. The animal stories seemed more babyish than the fairy tales. It worried her for a while but by next Saturday, she was ready for more. They made her think of the country; she felt familiar with the happenings. It seemed very possible that animals lived as they did in the books. Just because nobody knew for sure didn't mean they didn't. Of course, the way they dressed and talked was make-believe, but didn't people make believe, sometimes? The librarian introduced her next to the Bobbsie Twins. She was allowed to carry home two books now; she held them tightly under her arm and walked along with quick importance, feeling very business like.

Reading aloud came easily to her; Miss Johnson called on her often. She knew how a story should be read. It bothered her when children picked the words out slowly. Miss Johnson didn't do that. Beatrice tried to imitate her and was so conscious of the effort that she got no enjoyment out of it herself. She always had to reread it silently afterwards, so that she didn't know which she liked better, being picked out by the class and Miss Johnson to read aloud, or

reading quietly by herself to herself. She wished school were harder. 2A was still baby lessons, although when Addie said that, Beatrice would insist that 2A was just as hard for her as 8A was for Addie. A mountain can carry forests on its back but it takes a squirrel to crack a nut, so there.

That Fall the boulevard opened two new theatres, one for stage plays and one for movies, both with balconies. The old Lancaster movie house now seemed a small, dark dump in comparison, smelly inside and ugly outside. Admission dropped to a dime, and posters grew bigger and wilder. Penny flickers were installed in the lobby and for a minute you could crank a machine and look through a metal eye frame and wind out a short jerky film which ended abruptly with a blank shutter, suddenly white. It was fun for cowboy westerns, and drew big crowds of kids on Saturdays and rainy afternoons. At the Lancaster, you could stamp and whistle and clatter the wooden seats and throw peanuts and fruit peels around and shout to one another across the aisles and generally have a noisy good time of it. While in the new theatres, ushers in uniform kept everything quiet and dignified. The seats were covered with soft leather, the stage had a velvet curtain, the ceiling was high, the lights bright, the atmosphere ~~was~~ hushed. No popcorn and soda in here, no hissing, no cheering, no running around. Everything was solemn, neat. And the prices were higher, too. The piano player was now a lady organist with a high seat below the stage. The pictures were longer, fewer, high class.

For once, papa and mama went with them to see what it was like. Papa fell asleep. Emma liked the movie, she talked about the homes and people as though they were real. She was full of questions, comment, criticism. Who dresses like that, she asked. Who lives like that? A house like that must cost a

fortune. Beatrice and Ben walked ahead; what they liked was the Fatty Arbuckle comedy. They talked about the new lobby, the clean toilets with sinks and mirrors and closed booths, the rugs down the aisles and on the staircase, the black long white walls and the glass chandelier over the middle of the auditorium.

But their first play was altogether different, they couldn't get over it. Real people moving about on the stage, talking! Such a goodlooking hero, such a beautiful heroine! And a real shooting right in front of your eyes - how everybody jumped when the gun went off! And the excitement between acts, between scenes - why, it was like a story, a movie thriller, only better, because you could see and hear it and you didn't have to wait ten weeks to see how everything ended. Addie's fingers and mouth were red, Ben thought the villain was terrific and to Beatrice it was fairy land come true. The curtain went up and lo, it was as though a secret wall had opened. She forgot she was looking on from a seat in the theatre; she was there inside. For a few magical hours she was transported; her ears strained to meet and receive the new spoken words. She had never heard the language shaped and uttered in this fashion before. She had thought her teachers gifted with a special voice. Ruby Singer had seemed to her a human bird, making words melodious. But from the stage now rose a fantasy of sounds so rhythmic and compelling, that her throat swelled with a new desire. That words could become so beautiful, even the commonest which she had heard and used for so long! The leading players were indeed stars; she saw them as from a distance, radiant with light. Then there was a world like that, with real people in it. She must seek it, find it. She left the theatre, her feet already moving in that

direction, away from Addie and Ben between whom she walked, her ears not hearing them, her eyes not seeing the way back home.

And the people on Carlton Avenue thinking their ways and their lives better than all others, feeling superior, boasting, so sure of themselves! Beatrice listened, looked, compared. No, not those, not this, not here. What she wanted was elsewhere, somehow, sometime. There was a way, of that she was sure now, a road she must meet and follow till she got there. Papa, mama, Addie, Ben, her neighbors, her school, her cousins, all the streets and faces that she knew - beyond these lay others in the golden, promising future. What else were these but arrows pointing to it: her bible stories and fairy tales, papa's pride, mama's love, her teacher's lessons, the songs she sang, the sounds on the piano, the voices on the stage, the lives on the screen, the memories of lake and summer fields, the composite sensations of colors and fabrics and smells and tastes? A world of kindness, goodness, happiness, love. A world of honesty, dignity, respect, loyalty. A world of friendliness, sympathy, helpfulness, patience. A world sincere and noble, beautiful and sweet. A world without meanness, stinginess, greed, contempt, bickering, complaints, lies, ugliness, terror, fear, punishments, sins. A world where good and right triumphed over evil and wrong.

Who was good, what was right? Everyone was so sure they were. A big question mark slowly formed in her mind. The answers must wait. Meanwhile, she had enough to go by to know when to laugh, when to cry, when to accept, when to refuse. Salt for bitter, sugar for sweet, bread for hunger, water for thirst, a sweater for cold, a shower for cool, sleep for fatigue, skates for motion, school for duties, home for fun - her catalogue of knowables was factual and brief. She was seven, a girl, a Berger, in 2A - she was classified and labelled in a dozen different ways - but none of them held the answers. She would have

to wait, to go on till she found them.

On Hallowe'en, she joined the dressed-up street-band of children and went begging from door to door. The boys whirled socks filled with ashes and crushed chalk and ran after the girls. Faces were marked with smudges, coats were chalked with Hit-Me. The candy store had a sales rush on masks. Goblins, witches, hairy old men and demons roved the street, booing and frightening smooth-faced victims. Every door and stoop were left with an X and skull head, warning the passerby to BEWARE. Lanterns went swinging along with candles inside, fires started along the curbs, the fruit store hung a grinning pumpkin in the window, the grocery sold hallowe'en cookies, the butcher's black cat was caught and an empty sardine tin was tied to its tail. Papa chased after Ben and seized him just as he was climbing over the fence to the back lot and gave him a beating. Mama wandered off after Beatrice, dragged her away from the little beggars and gave her a spanking. Other children might get burned to death, other children might go begging at doors - but not theirs. Like a bunch of gypsies, mama exclaimed. Like a regular street bum, papa roared. Their faces were scrubbed, their clothes brushed and shaken out, their bottoms punished. Hallowe'en was all right for roughnecks and poor children but not for decent, respectable, jewish children. Since when was the last day of October a holiday, what kind of a holiday?

Halloween, did you ever? A crazy invention by some lunatic - spoiling good clothes, turning nice children into beggars, making accidents in the streets, pooh! Mama spit in the air. It's a wonder you didn't get killed! I wish some smart mother would come to the door and give you all a good licking, it would serve you right. Begging for money, shame on you! What's the matter, we need

charity all of a sudden, God forbid? Papa let mama do the talking; he had done his share. He looked at his son masterfully. He might be fat and forty, but he could still run, b, God! He said so and Ben had to grin; papa had taken him by surprise. He was secretly pleased, amused. Geo, he told Beatrice afterwards, you should of seen him, boy can he run! Addie sat smiling and nodding throughout, quite the lady and right where she belonged the whole time, at home, where mama and papa liked her. She was allowed to stay up with them - at least one of their children was good and gave them no trouble, they said. It was Addie's night, but Beatrice and Ben felt that they had had the fun.

During the second week of November, news of the Armistice came. The children ran shouting early from school. The streets were covered with fluttering broadsides
/down from the sky. Beatrice spied mama looking out of Mrs. Weaver's front window; she hallooed and waved. Ben wanted to go off and join a parade somewhere but mama said no. She had just came back from shopping on the boulevard.

I could hardly push my way out. Flags, confetti, fireworks, a regular Coney Island on the Fourth of July. All those people. It's worse than a fire. You'll get killed. You know I don't like my children mixed up with crowds. You stay home, where you belong, then I know you're safe. The war's over? I'm glad, with all my heart, I wish them the best of luck. But what have you got to do with it? Were we in the war, did we start it? My children stay here, with me. Papa's coming any minute; if he wants to take you, all right, but we'll wait and see, first.

When papa came home, he said, well, that's that.

Is it really true, asked mama.

Yep, said papa, it's over this time, I hope there'll never be another like it. At the table, he grew loquacious. Now to settle down to some real business and prosperity again. A few men got rich out of this war, made fortunes, but

if I know anything, there's going to be a lot more for some of us after it, and he shook his head meaningfully at mama.

Please God, she sighed, may it never be worse than this, I'm satisfied, you've got a good job, we've got a good home, the children have their health - what more do we want?

Never mind, papa said, you'll see. Give me a few years of normal, peace-time business, and well, he shook his hand in the air, looking at the ceiling, this country hasn't even started. Good Lord, the changes I've seen in twenty years! I may have been a greenhorn when I came here, but believe me the grass isn't going to grow under my feet, or over them, yet. We're going to get up and out of here someday and right to the top. Mark my words. You're going to amount to something, you children, war or no war.

Ben didn't get to see the parade; papa went to sleep. The sound of drums, band playing and cheers reached them from the boulevard. Beatrice settled down to a new book, while mama talked to Addie about the war... white sugar again and cheaper food prices... saving their liberty bonds... crazy men in a crazy world...

It became the accepted thing, that boys and girls could play together. It all started with Georgie Porgie lemonade pie, the chant of girls teasing boys. The boys took up the challenge, ran after the girls, caught one and kissed her. Sweethearts came into vogue. Good-looking Carl Fuller, aged nine, took a fancy to Beatrice and she to him. He was her knight, her prince, her champion. Carl was a nice jolly boy, neither rough nor sissyish. His big light brown eyes were curled by long lashes, his hair was thick and wavy, his face was strong, his smile pleasing. Beatrice thought of him all the time. He always had something in his pocket for her: candy, nuts, raisins, prunes, cookies. His father had

the other grocery store, the one used by the families on the other half of the street. Peter Hill's father had a grocery, too, but no one chose Peter for a sweetheart; he was afraid to take anything from the store. Peter was a real sissy; he had no one to play with. The boys were too rough and the girls didn't like him. Everybody called him mama's boy because he was always with her. He skipped like a girl, stamped his foot when he cried and acted like a regular baby. Carl was different. Beatrice was very proud to have him as her sweetheart, though she got mad when the children called them that. And if Carl was there, she just blushed and couldn't say anything because Carl would look at her, smiling. He told her once that she was the prettiest girl on the whole block and the way he said it made her heart dance inside. Whenever it was his turn to call "it" he chose Beatrice and after he caught her and everybody was hiding, he pulled her behind the staircase for his kiss. Beatrice liked that game. She thought that Carl and his older brother Victor were the nicest boys in the neighborhood. She felt sorry that they had such old parents; she wished they could be friends with mama and papa. But mama didn't object to her playing with Carl because she said he came from a good family. Decent home folk, she called them.

Then why don't you buy at their store, Beatrice asked, thinking how many more times she would be able to see Carl that way; she wouldn't mind going on all the errands then.

That's all I need do to start a fight with Mrs. Hill, mama said. Why, she would talk about me from one end of the street to the other till I'd have no peace. But why, Beatrice insisted. Why, just because, mama exclaimed, people on that side buy from the Fullers and people on this side buy from the Hills. It's always been like that and that's how it is, so don't bother me, please. Carl

will like you just as much, don't worry.

That has nothing to do with it, said Beatrice and went off pouting.

Later, she tackled papa about changing schools. Why can't we transfer to P. S. 5, she demanded, everybody on the street goes there except us. P. S.40's too far, papa. And you know how strict it is. You yourself said that in any other school we'd have all been skipped a long time ago. Don't we get AAA all the time? Why, Addie could have been in high school by now, and Ben in 6B maybe.

Hey, miss, what's this all about suddenly? Papa cocked his head and looked at her suspiciously.

Beatrice shook his look away; ho could he know what she was thinking? To go to school with Carl every day, to have him carry her books, to eat lunch together, to come running home together - But of course she couldn't tell papa that so she looked him straight in the eyes and said, what's wrong with P. S. 5?

That chicken coop, papa snorted, call that a school? Nobody learns anything there. No sir, not for my kids. P. S.40 may be strict and do no skipping but Doc Lansing knows his business all right, you'll know something when you get out of his school. If not, you stay there till you do. Huh, I had to pull all kinds of strings to keep you kids there after we moved from the district. You ought to be glad they even accepted you! It's because Addie was a good pupil there, that they allowed Ben and you in, don't forget that. They've made an exception of the Bergers, it's a special privilege just as a favor to me, understand? Beatrice looked at him doubtfully. It must be so, if papa said so and she could see he wasn't fooling, but just the same - All these good days when she could be with Carl, wasted!

In a dumb, easy school like P. S. 5, she ended, I could be skipped every term and graduate way before time!

And be a dumb, easy pupil, chuckled papa, adding, I'll make a lawyer of you yet, so help me God. A lawyer, what good was that? Beatrice left him, feeling cheated out of her case.

The Fall days slipped into an early winter. Harsh weather froze the windowpanes by middle November. People said it was the worst cold in years. The skies remained wrapped in sunless grayness for days on end and the wind blew fiercely. The streets became empty. Dusk closed in by five o'clock. Then it began to rain, angrily, cold slashing rain in big blobs that soaked through heavy coats and woolen stockings. In school, the children were forced to remove their shoes, stockings and outer jackets and dry them on the radiators in their classrooms. The wardrobe hung with dripping raincoats, umbrellas, rubbers. There was much sickness, mostly from colds. Absences increased until the school declared that only those pupils would be excused who brought a doctor's certificate. Tonsilitis became epidemic. First Addie had it, then Ben, then Beatrice. The doctor insisted that all three have their tonsils and adenoids removed that winter. To mama it was like ordering three coffins and a family plot at the cemetery. To send all three of her children to the hospital at one time for what seemed to her/an unnecessary operation - well, the doctor might as well issue their death warrant and be done with it. Papa still had his tonsils, she had hers, and both were alive , weren't they? She followed the doctor's prescriptions faithfully, added her worry and love for extra measures, and watched the sore throats recover with anxious impatience. She kept their necks wrapped, changed the compresses frequently, helped them through their meal time agony of swallowing and provided them with books and games, trying to distract them from closed-in peevishness.

Addie was kept in bed longest; she was too frail to risk returning to

school right away. So mama bought a folding cot and had Addie sleep by herself in the dining-room. In the daytime, she fixed her own bed for Addie in the front room. The life of Reilly, Ben said. Her piano studies and Hebrew lessons were dropped and she suggested that Beatrice could take her place. Mama and papa disagreed about it. Mama said Beatrice was too young and papa said that's the time to begin, when you're young. Beatrice waited uncertainly, hating Addie. In revenge, she suggested that Addie could do her school lessons and studying at home and volunteered to bring the homework assignment from Miss Pound, herself, every day.

She did, the day after Mr. Earnest arrived to give Addie her piano lesson and gave one to Beatrice instead. Now she had to practice every day - scales. She repeated the same exercise until the notes ran together aimlessly - now loud, now scarcely audible. Addie kept calling, not like that, play it slowly and carefully la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la. I'll do as I please, Beatrice retorted. She glared at the uneven ivory teeth smiling out of black gums and struck at them savagely. The big notes in the book looked like marching heads, all different sizes. Her fingers felt stiff, useless. Well, she wasn't taking any stupid Hebrew lessons from old graybeard, anyway. She had seenBen's book, the queer little house letters. Nobody home, she had muttered. All you did was say them like Ash, Bash, Cash. And who wanted to read a book that way? She had her bible stories in English; that was good enough. Repeating a lot of silly sounds after the rabbi! Ash, ash, bash, bash, cash, cash. She would never take Hebrew lessons, never! Her friends who went to Sunday School didn't have lessons like that. Why should she? They had a good time, they told her; they talked and laughed and listened to stories and learned things for prizes.

Mama wouldn't even listen. They're not your friends. You're a Jewish child with Jewish friends. Don't you ever let me hear you mention them or let me catch you playing with them, either. If you love them so much, I'll send you to live with them. Even as a joke it wasn't funny. How many times mama had said, all right, if you like it so much there, I'll sell you to Mrs. - and she can be your mother from now on, how's that? Of course she didn't want anyone else to be her mother but mama! Just because she was having a good time didn't mean she wanted to stay there for good and always! And now because she thought Sunday School lessons were nicer than Hebrew ones, mama said that.

The weekly piano lessons continued. La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la. Mr. Earnest dum-di'ed instead of la'ed, but the notes sounded just the same to her. She played only with her right hand; she had to hold it up, curve her fingers, strike evenly. It looks easy, Mr. Earnest said, but it isn't, it's the hardest lesson of all. Her mouth twisted; she wished he wouldn't treat her like a baby. She did as she was told and they went to lesson two. Now five fingers had to do the work of eight, the thumb passed under the middle finger going up and then the middle finger passed over the thumb going down. Fortunately, her lesson lasted about twenty minutes; she wished practicing took as little time as her lesson seemed to when Mr. Earnest was there. He talked and played a lot, that's why. Sometimes she looked through the whole book and then at Addie's piano books and sighed. When would she ever get there? She wished she were playing waltzes papa liked!

That year mama anticipated Christmas and announced an early celebration on Hannogger. It's just like Christmas, she explained, only it's a Jewish holiday. She made candy of honey and nuts, let Beatrice fill her stocking with fruits, and let the children ask for gifts, saying that papa would give them

Honnegger money, besides. It was fun, but not at all like Christmas, because it lasted only one day and none of the other children seemed to know anything about it. There was no Santa Claus, no lighted tree with decorations, no stories, no excitement in school, nothing. Beatrice fretted a great deal about it. The ten day holiday loomed emptily before her.

It was Carl who saved the holiday for her. He gave her a beautiful wrist watch, telling her not to show it to anyone and to keep it just for herself, from him. She was thrilled. A present from Carl and so beautiful, too, a tiny watch surrounded by diamonds, and a black band which she could tighten to fit her wrist.- she hugged him for joy, saying, oh thank you, Carl, it's the biggest and best surprise I've ever had! She took it off and put it in her coat pocket until he went away, then she just had to put it on again just to feel it against her skin. If Addie saw it! Her eyes sparkled. Addie's watch wasn't nearly so nice, nor had she gotten it from that skunk Gus Linder Imagine comparing Gus to Carl Fuller! Why, Gus was fifteen at least and no bigger than Carl who was nine. As for looks, well, maybe Gus could win a prize at a rat show. She ran upstairs and promptly got a scolding for coming in so late for supper. She sat down, wearing her new wristwatch. Then she remembered and slipped her left hand under the table, wondering why nobody had noticed it. Since papa was at the table, she sat still. The meal proceeded as usual, mama getting up to serve and clear the dishes for each course. Before they were finished eating, the door bell rang.

Now who can that be, asked mama, annoyed. Coming, coming.

Beatrice sneaked a look at her watch to assure herself it was still there, then cast a side glance at Addie.

Beatrice, called mama, come here!

Startled, Beatrice turned her head, met papa's nod and called back, who, me? Mama's and another's voice mingled outside, at the end of the hallway. Slowly, Beatrice started towards the door, asking again if mama meant her.

Yes, darling, come here a minute, answered Mrs. Fuller kindly. She was still in her grocery apron, her dark eyes gentle under bushy gray eyebrows.

It's impossible, mama said, she would never do such a thing without telling me.

Please, Mrs. Berger, don't be upset, you know how children are, they don't mean anything. It's just that my Dorothy came home and when she went to look for it, it was missing. Carl told me, so I came here to see. Maybe it isn't true, but even if it is, what? We're family neighbors and our children mean no harm. You'll see. Please let me talk to her and don't be angry, Mrs. Berger, I beg of you.

Beatrice told mama the whole story, simply and without lying. I was going to tell you right after supper, honest, mama.

There, you see, said Mrs. Fuller, believe me, they're good children, both of them, God bless them. Why should we punish them? A little child-play, the way we did at their age. It's all right, Beatrice, thanks. Maybe Carl will buy you a real watch some day, even nicer than this one, but you see, darling, this belongs to Dorothy. Carl didn't know; he made a mistake. You'll excuse him, won't you, darling, that's a good girl.

Mama was so shocked she just stood there with her arms crossed, speechless. However, since Mrs. Fuller was being so nice about it, she couldn't very well scold Beatrice. Besides, Max might not take it so goodnaturedly.

Who can blame them for being in love, two such fine children, with faces like the sun, said Mrs. Fuller, and she patted Beatrice's head fondly.

Beatrice stood there, rubbing one foot against the other, wondering how poor Carl felt and what he was thinking.

Please don't hit him, she whispered as Mrs. Fuller got ready to leave. Mrs. Fuller promised she wouldn't.

And neither will your mama, darling, you're a good girl. Again they said goodbye, the two women apologizing and thanking each other for the trouble. Then the door closed and mama signalled Beatrice to say nothing to the family about it.

It was one of the neighbors, mama said, she wanted to copy Beatrice's dress. Papa cleared his throat and raised his eyebrows. To interrupt supper for such a ridiculous reason! Addie's eyes searched Beatrice's face shrewedly. Beatrice grimaced. Try and find out, smarty fox! Ben asked for more chicken. The meal continued as before.

Carl kept away for a few days. He felt ashamed. It was Beatrice who ran past him one day saying, it's all right, Carl, I'm not mad, and put them back on good terms again. The streets were covered with snow and everybody went sliding down the middle of the street. Shoes and rubbers made it slippery smooth. The queue lengthened. Occasionally, someone slipped and went sprawling or landed in the snow, legs up. Snowballs flew and there was much face-washing with handfuls of snow. Unsuspectedly the back of a collar was seized and a cold scoop went shivering down. There was a scream, a rush, victims jumped up and down, howling. They operated as teams, boys against girls. Beatrice came upstairs with burning, red thighs, her cheeks like glowing apples, her ears and fingers on fire, her nose like a puppy's. The house warmth steamed around her, rushing her hunger with the smell of food from the kitchen stove. How she loved

to eat! How she enjoyed the crisp fat rolls slabbed with butter and donked in huge cups filled with steaming coffee-colored milk. She loved mama's cooking: the fricassee gravy, the meat balls rolled in black grape-vine leaves, the sweet and sour sauce made with raisins and almonds, the chicken stuffing, the potato pancakes, the fruit compotes, the schtrudel! The schtrudel, especially, because it was so rare, made of rolled tissues of dough sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon and filled with jelly conserves and crushed walnuts. Or the ones made with cheese, crispy outside and soft with baked cheese inside. Everything but soups and salads. She left those to papa and Addie. For papa, no meal was complete without soup, any soup, as long as mama made it. As for Addie/Addie could make a meal on salad alone: lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, radishes, hard boiled eggs, celery, scallions, green pepper, olives, cheese, and in the center, salmon or tuna mixed with lemon juice and mayonnaise. Mama was always inventing a salad for Addie: eggplant choppedwith onion and seasoned with vinegar and oil, caviar flavored with lime juice, sprats or sardines served with pimento and onion slices. Ben was like Beatrice, he liked solid foods better, a meat stew or pot roast with piping hot potatoes and plenty of rye or corn bread. Sometimes mama fixed candied sweet potatoes for a treat. And there was always milk, malt flavored or sweetened with chocolate syrup. But it had to be accompanied by cookies or cake. If the crumbs fell on her book, she waited till she was ready to turn the page, then shook them into her mouth or lifted them on moistened fingertip. She loved to eat when she was hungry, loved to be hungry when there was something to eat. And mama's ice box was forever full.

She came to look like mama more and more. Even to having the same/dark shadows under her eyes. It gave her face a strange, unchildlike quality. She was called a vamp, flirt. She resented the words. She didn't want to be like Theda Bara

and Pola Negri. She liked Pearl White better. She wished she were blonde, with white skin and blue eyes.

Why do we all take after you, mama, she asked, we're all dark!

Because you're my children, mama said proudly, then noticed Beatrice frowning. What's the matter, don't you like to look like me? I thought you said I was beautiful!

Oh, it's my hair, Beatrice grumbled, it's just like Indian sticks.

Silly child, mama said, your hair is lovely, so black and shiny, like satin, and she kissed it.

Shopping troubled her. Beatrice didn't like the way the sales people treated her. The shoes were too flat or too round; the styles weren't like Addie's. The hats were too babyish, with ribbons down the back or pompoms on top. It's too small, she complained, I want something older. In desperation, the saleswoman brought her an old lady's hat and said, what about something like this? Beatrice walked out of the store angrily. If they wanted to sell her something, that was no way to treat her!

Each time they came out of a store, mama said, never again, I'm not going to take you with me any more. A child your age talking to the salesman like that! Why, I'm positively embarrassed! You shame me!

Then why do you let them tease me, Beatrice demanded, wishing she had the nerve to slap his face when he squeezed her leg, the bum!

You're a child, mama explained, they're only playing with you!

Well, I don't like them to play with me, Beatrice answered. I want them to treat me like they treat you, that's all. I'm the one who's buying shoes, I'm going to wear them! Why don't they try to find out what I want, instead of talking to you!

Mama gave up. My God, you'd think you were eighteen years old, at least, and spending your own money! I never saw such a child! You'll be the death of me, yet, I swear. This is the last time I go with you, you hear? You'll be wanting high heeled pumps, next - did you ever!

Because Addie went in for a change of clothing that winter, Beatrice cried until hers were changed, too. Who wears long woolen stockings and long drawers buttoned to an undervaist these days, she echoed after Addie. I look terrible and feel like a stuffed mummy!

Mama set her arms on her hips. Not another word, you hear? What do you want me to do, throw them out?

Soon after Beatrice stole a pair of Addie's new short socks. It was Saturday; she ate a quick breakfast and went out before mama or Addie could see her. When she came back about an hour later, she met Addie's rage and mama's gasp with, I just wanted to show you I can wear socks, too! Addie pulled up her dress. My underwear, she yelled with choking fury. Before the struggle ended, Addie was weeping and wishing she were dead. Beatrice held her ground, obstinately declaring she didn't care, she wanted socks and short underwear, too.

I won't catch cold, she argued, look how warm I am, feel! And I fell in the snow a dozen times! I don't feel cold, I tell you, I love it blowing on my skin! Mama finally got her into her own clothes by promising that the next time she bought new clothes they would be like Addie's.

Thank God I haven't got a dozen like you, mama snapped, wondering how one child could be so much trouble.

January arrived after the coldest, windiest New Year's Eve remembered by anyone. Parties were called off, programs cancelled. Papa gave away the two

theatre tickets he had bought for a charity benefit. Everybody stayed home and Mr. Sampson, the landlord, agreed to furnish extra steam heat to last the night. He put an extra janitor on duty to look after the five apartment buildings. I'm staying home, myself, he said goodnaturedly. His wife was less friendly. She didn't approve of getting too intimate with her tenants, even though they were also her neighbors. When the rent was behind, when there was anything unpleasant to take care of, it was Mrs. Sampson who took charge. Her manner was curt, business-like. If it weren't for me, Mrs. Sampson would state, my husband would have long ago been a poor man. In this world you have to be firm, I tell him, you can't have friends in business. She was displeased at the expense incurred by her husband's amiability.

First it's one night, then they'll ask for it every night. Eleven o'clock, the steam is turned off - that's the rule and no exceptions. They'll be better off going to bed early on a night like this.

But for once Mr. Sampson overruled his wife's decision. The heat came up through the radiators all night long. At midnight, horns and bells sounded far off on the boulevard. For ten minutes, the sounds came through the frozen window panes along the alleys of Carlton Avenue. Beatrice heard nothing. In the morning, she remembered she had tried to stay awake. She felt disappointed. The new year had entered without her greeting it. 1919, it sounded funny.

After a week of school, more colds broke out. Diphtheria, people said. Ben came home at two o'clock the following Monday afternoon. His face was pale, but smiling. He had his neck warmly wrapped in a woolen scarf. Mama almost fainted when she opened the door and saw him. I have my tonsils out, he whispered hoarsely. Papa was telephoned at once. It was Ben's turn to lie around in

the big bed. I got ice cream, he grinned. Mama couldn't stop talking about it. The doctor came and laughed.

So you told them I sent you, eh? Good boy. They did a nice job, don't worry. Privately, he told papa, that kid has nerve, believe me! They had a drink of cognac together. Mama just sat there and looked at Ben, her tongue heavy with questions. He had walked into the hospital, asked for the clinic, said the doctor told him to have his tonsils and adenoids removed to prevent diphtheria, and been operated on right away.

He always, he boasted. Yeah, they were nice to me, made me lie down and go to sleep for a while. I feel swell. Beatrice held his hand tight: she was thrilled at his being so brave, so smart.

Oh Ben, you're wonderful, she said, chills going up and down her spine. And you weren't scared or anything?

Naw, it was easy - zip, zip, and they're out. Who wants diphtheria? Not me, he yawned. He gave Beatrice the rest of his ice cream. It don't taste so good now, he said. He fell asleep smiling and they all tiptoed out of the room, carrying their excitement to the outside hall, where they told all the neighbors about it.

Mama kept him home for two days, though he insisted there was nothing wrong with him. He wouldn't have minded the holiday from school, but mama wouldn't let him out. Who's there to play with, she asked.

I don't need anybody, he answered, though it vexed him that all the kids were in school just when he had a chance to stay home. The house bored him; he had no new Merriwell books and he had read the old ones over so many times that

he knew them almost by heart. On the second day, he balked. I got tests, ma, he complained, it's two weeks to promotion. His voice was still strange and mama gave him no for an answer.

Did I send you to the hospital, she said. That's all you need now, to go out and catch a cold. That's just when it's dangerous, after an operation; then you will have diphtheria, God forbid.

He sulked all day, not knowing what to do with himself. He took time to examine his throat in the mirror, trying to see what had been done to his tonsils; he saw a pink hole where his tongue disappeared, nothing more. Guess I'm all right, he said, satisfied. He took down his violin, carefully dusted the case, polished the bow, tightened the strings, made it tune with the piano notes he had been taught, then sawed Yankee Doodle on it. It squeaked, trembled on half notes, lost his foot beats, sounded awful. He tried again, bending his head and clutching his tongue between his teeth. After a few attempts, he went to My Country 'Tis of Thee. Mama came in to watch him; she stood in the doorway, gloating. You see how nice it is to know an instrument? He got to the end and bowed.

Not bad, eh, he said pleased.

Ben darling, why don't you take lessons again? If you can do like that by ear, imagine what you could play from notes.

A dark scowl moved over his face. Now ma, don't start that with me!

What can be nicer than being able to play an instrument, my son? You grow up to be a doctor, people come to your house, they say, isn't it wonderful, he can play the violin, too? Not like common men who don't know anything but to work like dumb animals, and drink and smoke and gamble and snore. She was

just warming up to her subject when Ben exploded.

Will you leave me alone? There you go, getting all wound up, and for what? You know I hate taking violin lessons and practicing all day long! So I won't be a doctor who can play the violin, I'll be something else, what's the diff? His temper threw the violin back into its case and up on the piano again. For my part, you can sell the darn thing, I don't want it!

Mama felt her tongue swell and dry. She stood there, her face suddenly young, hurt. When she spoke, her voice was gentle and sorry. Ben, what's the matter with you? Why can't you learn to talk nicely to mama? What did I say to make you act so wild? All I said was - and she started over.

Mama, please, he shouted and his voice cracked from the strain. Mama's hand went up to her face in alarm.

Ben darling, sonny, don't do that. God help me, you could have a hemorrhage from such a scream. Ben looked uncomfortable, both sullen and frightened.

Well, then don't bother me, he muttered, I told you not to keep me home today. That temper of yours, it'll get you in trouble some day, did you ever, a person can't talk to him without his becoming a tiger? Just like your father! I talk nicely to you and what do I get for my pains? A headache and insults! Believe me, some day you'll be sorry, and then you'll remember what I told you! She shook her finger at him warmly and went off to the kitchen to console herself for being a woman and a mother.

The cold continued all winter, whipped by wind and dismal rains that puddled the snow drifts into sloshes of dirty ice water. A weak sun edged the dark clouds, trying to daylight the streets. It was joyless weather, of use to no one. The dampness outlined doorways and windows. Voices and faces grew

peeved, turning to sudden anger. Houses huddled close to kitchen and bedroom warmth. Even the hallways were cold, too cold for play. The children fell into easy arguments and fist fights. Everyone fretted, waiting for change. Mornings began in loft-over darkness and moved uncertainly with the clock. Afternoons fell heavily, early exhausted. By four o'clock street lamps were lighted, making a comfortless return to night. Nothing helped to crack the core of monotony, neither meals nor sleep. A piano made aimless flights with loud chords, a victrola unwound and rasped the nerves with hiccoughs; someone sang. Books, games, dolls, nothing availed, not even end-term tests and promotions. Everything was a vexation, school, home, teachers, parents, friends, everything and everyone. It was a difficult winter, full of complaints. Money was short, coal was short, days were short, tempers were short. Littleness squirmed, stretching to pettiness.

Beatrice stayed close to mama, imitating. If mama made a bread twist, Beatrice kneaded and braided her piece of dough likewise. If mama dusted and swept and cleaned, Beatrice found a small rag and whiskbroom to help with. If mama embroidered a table cloth, Beatrice hooped a doily to make a napkin for it. She wanted to set the table, peel the potatoes, wash the dishes, scrub the floors, bake, cook, sew and manage the house, just like mama. But sometimes Beatrice got in her way and then mama would say, I didn't bring my child into this world to be a servant. You're not a servant and you do it, Beatrice replied.

But I'm a mother, I have to do the housework, mama wailed and she refused to let Beatrice crawl over the floor on her knees to wash the floor. If anyone should see you, they would think I was making a slave of you! That's no kind of work for a child.

But it won't hurt me, mama, Beatrice pleaded, I like to help you. Didn't you tell Addie a little work wouldn't hurt her, that it was good exercise?

Addie's older, she needs to develop her bones to get strong. Besides, when did you ever hear me ask Addie to wash floors? Addie came to the kitchen to hear what they were saying about her. She snickered when she saw Beatrice wrapped in an old apron of mama's.

Meanie, shouted Beatrice, why don't you help mama? Addie gave her a scornful look and went to the window ledge to help herself to a dill pickle. No wonder you're so weak and skinny, all you do is sit around and eat sour pickles, while mama does all the work! Addie sucked on the pickle with relish, making loud noises to show her satisfaction; then she stuck out her tongue. Ugh, such an awful cracked tongue, full of creases and pimples!

Addie shrugged her shoulders. Who cares? Nobody sees it, she answered.

Really, Addie, said mama irritably you shouldn't eat so many sour things. Beatrice is right. Why don't you take a glass of milk, instead?

Addie walked out of the room. Beatrice followed. Why shouldn't we help mama, I'd like to know? Do you want her to get old and sick from working so hard?

M Y O B, said Addie, turning her back.

Oh, no you don't, insisted Beatrice, getting in front of her, you should be ashamed of yourself, almost fourteen years old and letting mama do everything. Why can't you wash the dishes and let me dry them? Mama has enough to do. Between us, we could help her a lot. What do you say, Addie, she ended eagerly, wanting to be friends.

I'm not a servant, replied the almost-fourteen-year-old haughtily.

Beatrice folded her arms and screwed up her lips. And who do you think you are, she demanded, her voice rising in a scale.

A lady, Addie answered with an elegant smile.

Huh, sneered Beatrice, and what do you think mama is?

Ask her, said Addie, completely indifferent now to everything but buffing her nails with one of the ivory pieces papa had recently bought for the dresser set.

How can you be so rotten, you, you meanie! Beatrice gave her a push. Addie's fingernails plunged. Beatrice boxed, her arms swinging hard. Addie's elbows and knees were sharper; she tore hair, bit. Mama came running.

She doesn't fight fair, Beatrice sobbed, she's a cat, a mean skinny bony cat, that's what! Addie had less to show of injuries, but her face was a quivering mask of nerves and bloodless tissues. Mama hurried Beatrice to the bathroom to wash her scratches with peroxide.

There, there, she said soothingly. What do you mean, old and sick? I'm a perfectly healthy woman! I don't want any help, I don't need any. Did you ever? A child gets an idea in her head and holds on to it come what will. I let you play a little and then you make it out altogether different. You want to help me? Fine proof this is! You can help me by being good and keeping out of trouble, that's how! Now what am I going to do with that Addie? You know she's a weak girl and can't be upset. I bet she won't eat a thing and won't sleep all night. Och, you children, you'll be the death of me yet! Then, finished with Beatrice, she went off to placate Addie.

Denied the privilege of helping with the housework, Beatrice resumed mama's story companionship. So many stories! There was no end to them. Stories

about Europe and Grandma Stella and mama's brothers and sisters and mama's first sweetheart and then papa. How Beatrice loved to hear that! Her questions tripped along, catching the flow of mama's reminiscent mood, fitting in links.

I was nineteen years old. My sisters and brothers were married. Grandpa had died and the inn burned down. I had cousins living in America. Also, my sweetheart, the man I was engaged to first. He had gone ahead to find work so that I could have a home as his wife. Mama paused, sighed. To leave my poor mother, a young girl without any experience of life or travel, going who knows where and to what... And to leave my nephew, Rudolph, a little boy four years old, who was as dear to me as my eyes... How he cried and ran after the train as though his little heart was like a brook being set in the desert. Tobbela, Tobbela, don't leave me, Aunt Caroline, mama! Ah, you don't know. I'll never forget... And where was I going? To America, to the end of the world. Across Europe, train after train, travelling day and night. I didn't dare speak to anyone, to move unless I was told to... my money sewed in my clothes, my bags all marked, my tickets all fixed in advance... And then steerage, huddled in the bottom of a ship with foreigners, everybody sick and frightened and unhappy... Oh, what's the use, who can tell such things? They happen, they pass. I remember, but like something dreamed.

And then, said Beatrice.

And then, repeated mama, and her face became set, knowing how it all had happened and come to pass, still now it was only something remembered. And she told Beatrice about Ellis Island and how she was met by her cousins and went to live with them in a poor crowded house downtown...

And your sweetheart, asked Beatrice, where was he, didn't he come to meet you?

Yes, said mama sadly, he came, too. I was shocked when I recognized him. So sick looking, so thin. He was a gentle boy, sweet and kind, the kind that can't hurt a fly. How could he get along in a strange world, knowing nobody?

Didn't you want to marry him any more, asked Beatrice, her heart slowed by wonder.

I, shrugged mama, do you think it was up to me, what could I do? My cousins said he wasn't the man for me, that they know somebody who would make me a better match.

Papa?

Mmhm. But it didn't happen right away, of course. First I had to find a job and make some money so that I could support myself. I wasn't rich, you know. I had a few dollars to last me a month, two, who knows? I did what I was told. Two of my cousins worked in a factory, making belts. They took me there and showed me what to do and then I got a job there, too.

Was it hard?

A job, what do you think? You don't have to be smart and even if you're dumb, it doesn't matter. In those days, they took anybody.

Was it a lot of money?

Five, six dollars a week, till I was raised to twelve. I paid my board and managed to save something, besides. What did I need, a young greenhorn, I made my own clothes, did my own washing and ironing, shared my cousin's bed, and what I ate didn't call for any extras.

And then?

And then! I was nineteen, young, pretty - but my cousins were in a hurry, they were afraid I would become an old maid overnight. I begged them to wait until I could send for my mother. They argued with me, laughed at my foolishness,

told me to grab while there was still a chance, I could send for my mother later.

And how did you meet papa?

I didn't have to, he was always coming up to visit my cousins. Such a smart, so smart and well-dressed. He had a good job. Like now, he never had to worry about money, everything came easy to him. And my cousins thought he was a bargain. How they pushed me and teased me in front of him, praising my looks, my abilities!

And papa, was he good looking, too?

Oh, so so. I suppose he wasn't exactly a picture in a book but you wouldn't call him funny, either. He was slimmer then, a little taller than me. But it was his way of talking and dressing and getting around that made everybody look up to him. Like now. He hasn't changed much. My cousins raved about him, how he spoke English, how much money he made, how well he dressed, you know.

Did he love you, mama?

Love! He saw a pretty girl, young, healthy, well brought up, a girl who would make a good housewife - sure he loved me, why not?

And did you love him?

You and your questions, mumbled mama, what did I know about love? I was told to get married and papa was there, so I married him, that's all!

But wasn't your sweetheart mad? Didn't you love him first?

Poor Leon, mama said, shaking her head, he went away, out west, and later I heard that he died of tuberculosis. Mama sighed heavily.

Tuberclis, what's that, mama?

Consumption, said mama, her hands on her chest. Then she spit in the air and added, may you never know what it means.

And that's all she could get out of mama that day. The stories came to her in fragments, a little at a time.

Alone, she tried to piece the fragments together, to make her own story whole. How could her own life be complete unless she knew all that had led up to it? And there was no end. Names multiplied, attaching to hers because they had been attached to mama's, to papa's. What if mama had married the first man? What would he have been like as her father? How would he look, talk, eat, walk? Would he have loved her, set her on his lap, played with her? How he must have loved mama! Gentle, sweet, kind. He had become sick, thin. Poor Leon, his heart broken. Her imagination tried to restore him. To think that mama might have married another man, that everything might have been different! She had to know, had to get more pieces of the story.

Mama's answer disappointed her. God forbid, she said, I might have married him and had consumptive children and then been left a widow in my twenties! Beatrice felt her dream dissolving; she could think of nothing to say. Poor Leon vanished; she had nothing to hold him to. He gave way to papa for the second time.

And then? The questions started anew. What happened after that?

I became engaged. Mama's voice dropped wryly. Beatrice watched her pare the apples and waited until they were sprinkled with sugar, raisins and cinnamon and set in the stove to steam. He made me stop working to get my trousseau ready.

What's that?

Oh, things a bride needs when she marries.

A wedding dress?

Yes, that, too. I still have it.

Oh, let me see it, mama, please! Laughingly, mama let herself be coaxed into showing her dress It was folded away in camphor at the bottom of the wardrobe closet in the children's bedroom. Beatrice remembered the wedding picture, papa sitting stiff and unfamiliar in a dark suit with a flower in his buttonhole,

mama standing next to him, holding a large bouquet, her face pale and picture smooth under the bridal veil. The dress came out of moth balls, long yards of train, the material stiff with paddings and heavy brocade.

But it isn't white, Beatrice cried.

I had it dyed for my cousin's wedding a year later. She wanted me to be her maid of honor and I couldn't afford a new wedding dress, so!

Mama shook it out and blew pieces of camphor off the brocade. She laughed at it. Took me three months to sew that, she said. It was the style in those days. Such a funny dress, imagine! She held it up, draped the train on her arm and puffed the sleeves. A nineteen waistline, ha! I bet it's too small even for you. You could have put your two hands around me then, mama said, shaking her head. Ooh, so foolish we girls were! Corsets pulled till we couldn't breathe, just to be in style. Style! I had beautiful rosy cheeks and soft red lips, and because that wasn't the style, I covered them for shame. Green powder to look pale and weak, that was what they called beautiful! Can you imagine such nonsense? Beatrice examined the dress lovingly. The brocade was worn, the velvet flat and dull, the color faded except inside the deep folds of the skirt.

I don't know why I keep the thing at all, mama sighed. For a long time I thought I would make it over into something, use the train for a suit, maybe, or a set of curtains. And now look at it! I guess I kept it for the sentiment, something to remember. Well, let it stay there. Someday I'll just throw it out and forget it about it. She stuffed it back in the bottom drawer and hurried back to the kitchen, in time to save the apples from collapsing.

And what else did you make for your trousseau?

Sheets and pillow cases and table cloths and towels, everything for the house, as well as for myself. What didn't I make!

What, insisted Beatrice.

Mama looked at her, amused. Wait till you're a young lady, you'll see.

Ah ma, please tell me now!

And her voice rich with remembered exuberance, mama described all the lovely things that made up a bride's dowry: the beautiful silks and satins, the fine lace, the embroidered monograms, the dainty linen handkerchiefs, the imported fabrics from the Orient... For nightgowns, slips, underwear, bed jackets, negligees - wait, you'll see, please God, you'll have them, too. Dresses for all occasions and hats and coats and gloves and shoes, enough to last a two year honeymoon, and then, besides all the clothes, everything for the home, silver and glassware and dishes, sheets, towels, tablecloths. Believe me, I had so much, there wasn't room for an extra toothpick in my hope chest. It was packed from top to bottom! And then, the gifts! First of all when you're engaged and receive a big diamond ring from your sweetheart. And then, about a month before your wedding day, when your friends give you a surprise linen shower. And then, presents for your wedding. And afterwards, more presents when they come to visit you at your new house. Wait, you'll see, darling. Someday - And mama swung her head from side to side, as though no words could possibly describe all that that meant. After all, I was a poor girl, a foreigner, without a father, may he rest in peace, and my mother far away. Believe me, my dowry was nothing compared to what Addie and you will have, please God.

Did you have a big wedding, ma? What was it like?

A wedding, what do you think? We hired a big hall, had singers and musicians, the people came -

How many?

Fifty, a hundred, more, I don't remember - and then the canopy was ready and the march began and everybody took their places and papa went up the aisle

and then my cousins, and when everything was settled and still, I came out of a little room -

Why, where were you?

Nobody can see the bride until the last minute. She has to keep out of sight until the music starts. Here comes the bride, all dressed in white, la la lala, dee dee deedee. Mama straightened up and walked stiffly through the kitchen, keeping time to the slow tune of las and dees. Beatrice watched her, imagining it. Only it wasn't like that, mama interrupted, remembering. How I cried! I thought they would have to carry me. A bride, getting married, what that means to a young girl! And I, all alone, with nobody from my own family to see me, to congratulate me, to help me - Mama's eyes were suddenly small and wet, she buried her nose in a corner of her apron. Beatrice ran up to embrace her. That's how it is. A girl gets married and everybody cries. Isn't it silly? Just when she's supposed to be so happy. But after all, it's no joke, getting married. One day you're a girl, free and able to do anything you like, and the next, you're a woman, a wife, with a home and a husband to take care of. So that's all, now you know the whole story of my life. Beatrice waited until mama had tested the soup, sure that there was more. Only book stories ended, and so they were married and lived happily ever after.

And then when the wedding was over, did everybody go home?

Hm? Oh, I forgot. No, after the ceremony came a big banquet. In the center, a long table for the bride and the groom and all the important relatives. And then, all around, tables for everybody else. Believe me, it was some banquet. Leave it to papa. You know him. The best of everything. The tables covered with white linen and ferns and flowers. And wine, don't forget that.

As much as they could drink. And whiskey and cigars. And a ten course meal. They ate and drank until I thought they would explode. While I sat there eating my heart instead. And papa laughing, having the best time in the world! But that's how it is, the men laugh and the women cry all through life. Not a crazy world? Well, and then, everybody gets ready to dance. They've eaten, they've drunk, they've laughed and joked. Now they want to go wild altogether. So they dance! Two, three, four, till the whole room is just one big circle, stamping and clapping in time to the music.

And you?

He they put in the middle and I had to dance with one man after another. I thought my feet would come off! A bride, some fun - now go away and leave me in peace, I've told you everything.

Beatrice didn't mind waiting. She knew, happily, that the story would go on and on, for days and days and days, because after the wedding, mama and papa must have gone to live in a house somewhere, and mama would tell her about what she did and about papa's job and about Grandma Stella and Grandma Theresa and everything that had happened before she was born... It was a wonderful story! She hugged it to her, thinking how much she already knew, of all the things that had happened since! Alone, on a chair in mama's room, she leaned back and closed her eyes. She could tell a story, too, just to herself. Once upon a time, there was a man and his wife and two children and their names were mama and papa and Addie and Ben and then one day a baby was born named Beatrice. Now this little baby was very pretty and very good, she hardly ever cried and she ate everything she was supposed to and she slept very quietly and never gave her mama any trouble. She had a nice white crib in mama's room and everybody liked to play with her,

especially her brother Ben, who would shake her rattle and say goo goo goo and play peek a boo with her whenever she was awake and sometimes would feed her pieces of apple or comb her hair or tickle her foot or push her carriage. But it was Grandma Stella who had wheeled the carriage, not Ben. They had lived somewhere else, not here. Mama said near a park. She sighed, feeling tired and content. She could start the story with her first doll or tell about the operation, how she had come in and mama was washing clothes in the bathtub, or tell about the burglary that day when she and mama came up from the butcher shop or... And then, all the songs she knew, from the beginning to the latest one, Mickey... She was called for supper, half-way through singing snatches to herself. It didn't matter. She could go on when she got into bed or start over again tomorrow. She had all the songs and all the stories inside her; she could sing them to herself and talk to herself whenever she wanted... Then, too, mama might tell her a new story tomorrow.

Her main worry was of time going too fast and too much happening. At the end of a day, when she came to sum it all up, it came as a surprise that so many things had taken place all in the same day. Sometimes, she grew confused. Was that yesterday? She tried to penetrate through the mystery of that day. The clock only told the hours, twelve of them, its flat square face marked by black numbers, two arrows moving around it to the regular measure of small ticks. To the clock, one day was just like another. Papa wound it up and it went, day and night, forever the same. And the calendar which hung in the hall was not much better. At first, when it was new, it gave you a wonderful new feeling - a whole new year to begin over again, fresh! It had a shining picture on top, the pages were smooth and white, the months and dates clear, the holidays conspicuously red. Beginning with January 1, even the names of the days had a

now sound. It was fun writing them down with their new dates. How important each day was, a day of the year all to itself, having its own month and date! And then the first page was ripped off, February began, the dates and the names continued as before, and what good was the calendar? Beatrice frowned. A day, how could the calendar show what that meant? You tore off the page, you could look at the pages of months ahead, you could put a circle around your birthday, but the whole thing just paper! No, a day wasn't like that at all. To think that when a day started it would last only for one day, then disappear for ever and ever! And nothing could bring it back! Even if the clock looked the same and the date was still there on the calendar, Tuesday, February 24, 1919, which was yesterday. The knowledge awed her. It frightened her in a way. It was so mysterious. Where did the days go? Each day made you a day older. That changed you a little. How could that be, when you remembered just how you were a little while ago? How could you be different, I, Beatrice? Even though mama had told that she had once been a little girl just like Beatrice. It was hard to understand, to believe. Why, mama was mama, just as she, Beatrice, was Beatrice! And yet there it was, the day. Wasn't that proof? She frowned, trying to penetrate the mystery. Maybe sleep had something to do with it. Maybe you changed in your sleep. You went to sleep one day and you woke up the next day. She tried to watch, to find out what happened. She hated to fall asleep fast, wake up fast. Now I'm going to sleep, my eyes are closed, but I can open them if I want to, see, it's dark, Addie's beside me, Ben's in the next bed, there's the window, there's a light across the way, mama's in the kitchen cleaning up. Again, eyes closed, let me see, today. I had a fight with Addie over the bathroom, then she put her finger on my glass of milk, mama made me eat oatmeal, I had two rolls with butter and a soft boiled egg. They had gone the long way to school because of the ice on

the hill. During the salute to the flag, she had guessed and everybody laughed. She couldn't remember the words for The Star Spangled Banner, she didn't know what they said. Miss Willis had praised her homework, put an A in the book. In the afternoon she made Beatrice monitor during the study period. In the penmanship lesson, she had almost written 2A on her paper by mistake. Imagine! 2B, she said to herself and repeated the new class a dozen times. And Ben in 6A already. Addie in her last term. All because the days went so fast, were left behind. Something inside shocked, hurt. Tears started behind her nose, slipped down, making her pillow wet. I don't want to change, she sobbed in her head, I don't want to get older, I want to stay the way I am. Oh ma, I won't be your baby any more, I'll get big and you'll change and nothing will be the same again. Please God, make the days last. Her ears strained to the clock's steady tick. Tick, tick, tick, and the calendar ready for tomorrow, next month, July, November, December. I mustn't fall asleep. See, I'm not. It's still today. Everything's the same. Mama's in the kitchen and papa's reading a paper in the dining-room and Addie's here and Ben's here and I'm Beatrice and today is - what is it? She tried to remember the name of the day, the date. What had she written on her paper? February 25, 1919. Was Tuesday yesterday? It was like a long dark stairway. She kept climbing, climbing.

She remembered with a start. In the morning, her eyes told her. Quickly, she shut them so that she could remember all about it. She had fallen asleep again. When? How I'm going to sleep. Oh yes, and mama and the window light across the way and the clock. Wait a few minutes, please, she pleaded to the new day. How did she wake up? What was the last thing in her sleep? If she could remember, then maybe. Vaguely, she probed back into her dark mind.

Hey you, how many times do I have to call you? You'll be late! Addie's voice roused her. Late! Everything slipped out of her head as she swung out of bed and hurried into her clothes. What if they wouldn't wait for her? What if - The new day began.

It was nice on Saturdays and Sundays. Then she could stay in bed as long as she liked. Now I'm waking up. Good morning, day. I think I had a dream, a nice one. I think I'll go back and have some more happen. Yes, but if she didn't get to the table for breakfast before Addie and Ben, there wouldn't be any jolly doughnuts left for her. Maybe they would have cream cheese with smoked salmon. And the hard rolls, like big life-savers. A daisy egg, not spilled or spoiled. Maybe some sour cream with banana. Or cheese blintzes.

But on cold mornings, especially if she awoke early, it was fun playing sleep. It was like watching yourself. And sometimes, she got back to her dream so fast, that she could really remember all that had happened. That made her happy. To remember the very moment when she fell asleep, and then the moment she woke up to remember her dream - it made her new-day feeling one of great satisfaction.

It was nice to know the months, too. Not just their names, but what they were like. March was windy. Sometimes it blew so hard you had to run holding your dress down. Papers, books, hat - you had to watch everything. It made her laugh how everything flapped and lifted, ready to blow off. Sometimes she had to run a block to catch her hat, and once when she caught it, all her books fell down and the pages whipped open, wanting to tear loose. There was a March game called The Wind and the girls ran shrieking after each other, trying to lift coats and skirts, yelling, the wind's a boy! Beatrice loved the way the wind rubbed over her face like a towel, making her cheeks red and her skin cool. It was fun

letting the wind push you along; you couldn't walk slowly or stand still for long. Going downhill gave you a feeling of being followed; you raced with the wind behind you. And when it rained, you didn't care any more because it wasn't like the winter. March was a bluffer, making believe he was worse than any other month. He roared and rushed around, trying to frighten you, but you knew better; the ice gave way to mud, the streets looked softer, the sky was warmer, there was something in the air that told you spring was coming. So when April came, you expected showers, sudden quick curtains of rain that fell from the sky as though it was tired of hiding behind winter wools. The sky shed its heavy flannels just as children did. The sky changed its house around just as mama did; Beatrice saw the sky hang out its sheets and towels, paint its house a fresh blue again. That year, when mama picked out the new wall paper, Beatrice looked eagerly through the sample book for birds flying, clouds fluffed out like whitewash on a line, silver lines of rain splashing up on dainty tip toes, a blue wall full of stars, fairies running over mud and throwing flowers from their hands. She turned the pages one after another, looking. The designs were big, the paper coarse, the colors solemn. Mama chose a brown for the dining-room, a blue for her bedroom, a striped green for the children's room, and an ivory for the hallway; the kitchen and bathroom would remain plaster white. Beatrice tried to share mama's interest in matching the paper to spring covers and curtains, but the sombre motifs, suggesting nothing but a repetition of large scrolls in parallel lines, refused to adapt themselves to her spring mood. The old paper was scraped off the walls, despite the house painter's wanting to lay the new on top of the old. What for, argued mama, to give the cockroaches protection? Not in my house, thank you. And off the old paper came. Beatrice salvaged a few strips to play with; the

stiff pieces lent themselves to fireman hats and boats. The gutters next to the curbs made good sailing after a rain. Ben showed her how to make a boat; they tested it in the bathtub.

Then the wind and the rain disappeared and it was May, the streets bright with sunshine again, the afternoons long for games, the air full of wonder and magic. Jolly apples came along on gay spoked poles. Lemonade and fruit crushes appeared on moving stalls. Sweet tooth broke out, the children chewing all day long. Nigger babies, foxy grandpas, jelly beans, gum candy, licorice sticks, chocolate pops, sour balls, nougats, caramels, peppermint drops, tootsie rolls - Brook's was a busy store with penny-over-the-counter sales. May, with its party parade and floats and prize contests, Saturdays with its movie serials and theatre matinees and library books and shopping expeditions, Sundays with family visits and comic strips and good clothes and early supper and preparations for next day's school. May was lovely, May was young, just like children, full of growing things, and May was happy. It was the month for kites and skates and bicycles and jacks, for hoop rolling in the park and all kinds of laughing fun. It wasn't hot and it wasn't cold, you didn't freeze and you didn't perspire. It was just right. You could run around all day and never get tired. Beatrice didn't; she hated to go to sleep now. She begged mama to have supper later; it was so hard to come upstairs and be indoors when it was still light outside. She loved the dusk; it came so quietly, so softly. You could see it from far, coming over the roofs, down the long street, like dark veils trailing. And when she was in bed, something inside wanted to be outside, to be part of the May evening. The air was so tempting, as though it had a voice which called you, come see the street lamps, come see the people, come, come, come. And because she couldn't, wouldn't go to sleep yet, she slipped into the bathroom with her book and read and read until mama found her sitting there, red eyed and intense, forcing her-

self to stay awake. That happened many times, often past midnight. Then mama would scold and worry, not knowing what to do, where to hide the book, how to punish her, but mostly vexed by the child's loss of sleep.

You'll take your eyes out, reading by that light! You'll get hunched and skinny, sitting there hour after hour! What's the matter with you? Everybody's sleeping and you want to stay up! Pooh, did you ever, a child of seven doing such a thing! Must I hire a private policeman to watch you? Oh will you catch it, if papa hears about this! But usually Beatrice pretended that she had just gone into the bathroom.

Can I help it if I have to go at night? And even though mama knew it wasn't true, she was so tired and anxious to get Beatrice tucked in, that she hadn't the heart to argue. Maybe mama loved their secret tete-a-tete's as much as Beatrice did, coming in in her nightgown with her hair in two long braids and her feet bare, seeing Beatrice sitting there alone and full of childish innocence, her gown tucked up around her, her face momentarily startled, her book heavy in her hands. I got an extra kiss good-night, Beatrice whispered, cuddling against mama as she was carried the few steps from the bathroom to her bed. Mama's love was part of the May night; it was like having a little bit extra. Then she relaxed and went to sleep, her last sigh one of deep content. Oh May was precious, a time that wove itself into her being and there made a nest to which it could return year after year and always find a welcome, its haven untouched and everything left just as before.

June was the month before vacation, the last month of school. That made it special enough at any time, but this year was Addie's fourteenth birthday and her graduation into high school and Cousin Anne's wedding and so many other

things that Beatrice found her coming promotion into 3A not nearly so exciting as she thought it should be. Cousin Anne's wedding came first. Mrs. Bromley was a frequent visitor to the house for weeks, asking mama's help about the dress, the banquet, the invitations, the trousseau. She and mama were good friends; their children liked to call them by their first names, Caroline and Jeannette. Anne's pending wedding was a source of great joy. Her mother cried when she came to tell about it.

It's what I wanted for Terry, too, she said, if only she had listened. Thank God, Anne found such a nice boy like Freddy. A good, respectable boy, from decent people. They're simple, poor people, but what of it? He has a small job, makes a regular weekly salary .... believe me, he'll make Anne a good husband. After all, what do they need, two young people just getting started? They love each other and that's all. Anne says she'll keep on working for a year or so until they can have a real home. Why not? Isn't it better that way than to wait and have trouble afterwards? Terry - I don't know what her hurry was! A beautiful girl, seventeen years old. If I live to be a hundred, Caroline, I'll never be able to understand it. What did she see in that Jim? How could such a thing happen to her? When, where, why? Were my eyes in back of my head? I had no idea. That my Terry, who was so popular, so full of fun, a sweet girl brought up in a good home - How could she do such a thing? Did she miss having a nice home, nice clothes, boy friends, good times? Then what? And of all the boys she knew, Jim! What did she see in him, I'd like to know? Short, conceited, a run-around, a fellow without any sense of responsibility. It's like a thorn in my side, I can't forget. If she had told me, at least. How was I to know? I never even guessed how it was with her. Eloped and had a baby - and finished! At seventeen when her life should just be beginning. Well, it shows you how little

a mother knows about her own children. Believe me, I'm sorry she's coming to Anne's wedding, even if it is her own sister's - it'll break her heart to see what she missed. And Anne so happy, so full of plans and excitement. What else does a mother want but to see her children safely married? You were smart, Caroline, not like me, with eight children, four of them girls. What for? To worry and eat my heart out until I could see them all grown and on their way? Mama nodded her head, sighed - three were enough.

Beatrice felt uneasy. She loved Terry, although she had only seen her a few times. Terry was so beautiful! Her thick wavy hair, reddish brown, and her laughing eyes, green mixed with grey, and the shape of her face and her teeth. Terry was like sunshine breaking through dark clouds, like trees in a storm, like a sparkling waterfall, like - Beatrice didn't know what. There was nobody like Terry, nobody. The sound of her voice so strange and rich, deep toned and clear. Her slender fingers and rosy nails white tipped to careful points. And everything about her so clean, sweet smelling and dainty, as though each thing she wore was brand new. What did Cousin Jeanette mean? How could Terry do anything bad? She wished she were going to Terry's wedding instead of Anne's. Terry as a bride - her eyes hurt behind tightened lids trying to picture her dressed in white, wearing a long veil, carrying flowers.

Fred and Anne came over one day; they wanted to thank mama for helping them so much. They sat in the dining room talking, while mama gave them tea and cookies, fruits and nuts. Please, Cousin Caroline, don't go to any trouble, we just came in for a few minutes. But mama wouldn't hear of having company just for the sake of talking; she kept apologizing that there wasn't more to set out on the table. Anne and Fred kept smiling at each other, loving to be together.

Beatrice tried to share their mood. Anne was sweet looking, Fred blond and clean cut with a nice plain face. She watched them without curiosity, interest or jealousy. Anne wasn't Terry.

After a while, they talked about the guests invited only to the wedding reception and those included in the dinner afterwards. Suddenly, Beatrice thought to ask, and what about me? Anne and Fred stared at her, then started to laugh, but Anne looked embarrassed and Beatrice could see her trying to catch Anne's eye. Anne reached for Beatrice's hand; her voice grew honeyed, consoling. Now, darling, you know children can't come to weddings. Beatrice looked at her, uncertain as to whether she was joking. Fred's laugh slowed, broke off falsely. Anne squirmed and her chair creaked. Beatrice felt her face getting red; her hand slipped out from under Anne's. You mean I'm not invited, she asked faintly. Fred's hand came down on the table with a thump and his laugh bumped against the silence.

Of course you're invited, he shouted. What do you mean, Beatrice isn't invited, he demanded, turning to Anne with a quizzical look through which one round eye blinked. How can we be married if she isn't there? Beatrice moved back.

I don't care, she said softly.

Now darling, began Anne uncomfortably -

Sure you're coming, Fred's bluff voice intercepted, whatever made you think you're not? Anne opened her mouth to say something but Fred waved his hand at her.

I don't care, Beatrice repeated, feeling herself get smaller and smaller inside.

Ah, go on, said Fred cheerfully, that's no way to act, a big girl like you. Beatrice gave him her goodbye look, she didn't like that kind of baby talk

and wouldn't have anything to do with people like that. She started towards the door. See you at the wedding, Fred called out. Freddy, please, Anne said, smiling.

That's a nice way to leave, mama said, without saying goodbye to your cousins.

I'm not a baby! Beatrice stamped, her voice suddenly high and tearful. If they didn't want to invite me, why didn't they say so? Addie's going! With a sob, she rushed into the bathroom. Nor would she answer when mama called and rapped at the door as her cousins were leaving.

After they had gone, Beatrice had it out with mama. I won't stay home, she cried, I'm not a baby! Why can't I go if Addie can? I'm just as good as she is! Mama tried to explain: there wouldn't be any children there, the dinner cost five dollars apiece, per person, it would last till late in the night. But I'm their cousin, Beatrice exclaimed, look at all you've done for them! And if Addie's worth five dollars, why ain't I? I've never been to a wedding in my life, I want to see one! No wonder you've been talking to Addie behind my back! You're making a dress for her to wear at the wedding, I know! It isn't fair, it isn't fair! I want to go, too! Mama got mad and refused to talk to her. She would wait till papa came home, that's all.

The argument was interrupted by a singer in the alley. Beatrice went to the window to look down. It was a man, singing between the two walls of the apartment buildings. His head was bare and he kept turning his face from side to side, looking up. Roses are grow-ingin Pi-cardy - his song climbed, begging at windows. He caught sight of Beatrice and bowed, lifting his hat in the air. She liked his loneliness, felt sorry for him. She had a penny left over from her morning's spending money. Grumbling to herself, she ran and got it out of her drawer, then wrapped it in a piece of newspaper and threw it into the yard.

It made a small noise on the ground. The man bowed to her again and went on singing. When he went away, Beatrice continued to sit at the window, her chin in her hand. She would run away. She could sing in yards, too. She had often seen gypsies wandering around, trying to collect money by playing and dancing in front of houses. Once she had seen a little girl, her own age, wearing long round earrings and beads over her red blouse. A thin little girl with big black eyes. She had danced barefoot, waving a tambourine. Beatrice got excited. She went straight to mama's room and began practicing. She took off her shoes and tied a handkerchief of papa's around her head like a bandana. Ro-ses are grow-ing in Pi-cardy; she remembered the words and the tune. She could beg for pennies, too! If she had to, she could get along just as good as anyone else! If mama wanted her to leave home, all right. She wasn't going to get down on her knees because of an old wedding! And if Addie went, oh boy! Then she would show them! She could just picture them when they came back from their old banquet and found her gone. How mama would cry and tear her hair! How sorry Addie would be , knowing that it was all her fault! Papa would call all the policemen and go looking for her! But she would hide, she would go far away - she'd show them! Ro-ses are grow-ing in Pi-cardy - her voice was savage with delight, full of heart-tearing emotion. The pennies poured down. The windows and streets were full of tears, smiles, pity.

In the end, it was decided that she could come to the reception and then go home. Ben elected not to go at all. Weddings didn't interest him. Addie said nothing, chewing on her lips; <u>she</u> was staying for the banquet. Beatrice quivered. After all, Addie was graduating and had to have a white dress, anyway, so it wasn't as if. Her thoughts turned to the wedding and she began wondering

what it would be like. It was fun seeing mama try on her new clothes. She had bought a black lace dress for the occasion and black satin shoes with a silver buckle over the instep. Although mama could fix her own hair with Castle clips and had long strands saved from former cuttings for the high pompadour and twisted bun - this time she went to the beauty parlour for a special hair-do. When Beatrice saw that Addie was going along, she insisted on going, too. Just as she suspected, Addie was to have her hair curled.

All right, said Beatrice, crossing her arms, I want my hair curled for the wedding, too! Everybody laughed.

How can your hair be curled, you little cockroach, mama said, exasperated. Do you want your bangs to look like spitcurls? Angrily, she left to sit in the waiting room. Beatrice stayed on, watching Addie's long thin hair getting ironed and pressed into waves and ringlets, thinking Addie looked silly with her hair crimped short above her neck and her scalp showing between each wave. Silly, but she wanted to try it out anyway. So when Addie's hair was finished, Beatrice slipped into the chair. The hairdresser set the curling iron back on the gas range. Beatrice smiled at mama through the mirror and mama grimaced back, disgusted. Then the iron was applied. It felt hot, steamed. She could see the girl's hands wind her hair just as she had for Addie's. Then the iron slipped out and her hair straightened back, flat. Addie let out a guffaw and mama burst into laughter.

You see, explained the girl, your hair won't even take a curl. Beatrice felt her hair, astonished. She made the girl try again. Nothing happened. Her thick straight hair fell like silk wires from the curling iron and returned to her head intact. Beatrice couldn't cease to marvel all the way back home. Indian sticks, that's what she had! She would die with straight hair, without a single curl or wave in it! She hated her hair more than ever.

The reception took place in the local synagogue, a short walkaway. The

hour was set for five o'clock, following Sabbath dusk. Papa walked ahead with Addie and behind came mama, stiff and elegant in her new dress and high pumps. Beatrice held her hand proudly, trying to imitate mama's important carriage. She felt less dressed up than she would have liked to be but at least she had not been left out. They came to the temple and met many familiar faces outside. The men laughed, looked at their gold-chained pocket watches and shook their heads. These weddings - if it starts by seven o'clock, we'll be lucky. The women admired each other's appearance, exchanging notes. Addie stood by quietly, looking like a well-behaved oldest daughter should. Her small even teeth parted for a given smile each time she was greeted and her eyes quickly darted towards Beatrice who missed nothing. Mama introduced them as her oldest and her youngest, and everyone said they looked just like her. Then Addie and Beatrice looked at each other distrustfully, wondering how that could be the case. But mama seemed very pleased and proud as though they were complimenting her.

The temple was dimly lighted inside, warm and airless. Many people were already seated and their voices went up and down while their hands fluttered and their handkerchiefs perspired. Papa was asked to check the altar and mama found seats about half way up the aisle near the wall. The girls sat down on either side of her and started to fan themselves. Mama whispered, pointing out the fat lady, the tall man with the beard... Beatrice grew restless, wondering when it would start. She stood up to uncrease the seat of her taffeta dress. More and more people came in. Voices hummed. Someone beckoned. Beatrice wished the bride would come and that they would stop fussing with the canopy up front. The strange lights, the heavy air, the buzzing reverberation of sounds through the room made her yawn, feel dizzy. Addie poked mama's arm and nodded towards

someone. The minutes dragged. At last the Bromleys came. There was a flurry of cries at the door. The room grew lively as they made their way forward, stopping to greet friends and relations. Cousin Jeannette wore a soft creamy colored lace dress over a brown satin slip. She had a corsage of flowers pinned to her waist. Her hair seemed blacker than usual, like shoe polish, Beatrice thought. Her face was stressed, her eyes dilated, despite frequent smiles and salutations. Seeing mama, she leaned across the row and called, hello, Caroline, you look wonderful, I wish it was over already, I'm so nervous. Mama nodded and told her to take it easy. The Bromleys made a good showing, there were so many of them: Abel, Julius, Eli and Leo, all husky, red headed, freckled, two of them already grown men; then Irene and Ray, frivolous looking teeners, who waved excitedly at everyone, then Terry, wearing blue and looking like an angel - Beatrice wanted to throw her arms around Terry and tell her how much she loved her. Terry caught her eye and smiled. And then the Bromleys got settled and the room grew quiet again. But still the wedding did not begin. People went up and down the aisle as though on various errands. Small conversational groups huddled in front of the altar; they gestured, shook their heads. The cantor arrived, the rabbi came in through a side door. People took their seats and lined up against the walls. The lights danced wearily before Beatrice's eyes; she yawned repeatedly, feeling her mouth getting dry and stale. The heat weighed down upon her; she felt sticky all over.

Mama, she said, I don't feel good. Suddenly the room lopsided and she sprawled. Vaguely she could hear sounds, feel herself being slapped, lifted. Outside, she found herself on a chair, her dress wet, mama bending over her and patting her face.

Beatrice, darling, it's mama, are you all right? The air rippled over her face, cooling. People standing around, looking at her. Her eyes not papa's; there was concern in them and something of annoyance. She felt tired, unhappy.

Ha, she whimpered, not knowing what to do.

Come on, miss, you're going home, said papa. He whipped his silk handkerchief from his breast pocket and gently wiped her face and dress dry.

I'm so sorry, pa, she said, seeing his nice handkerchief spoiled.

He turned, grunting, it's all right, folks, you can go back inside - thanks. Then he told mama he would take Beatrice home and put her to bed. Mama gave her a worried kiss.

You'll be a good girl and go right to sleep? Beatrice shook her head wearily. A taxi took them to the house. Papa carried her upstairs. After he undressed her and pulled back the covers, he asked her if she wanted a glass of milk. There was no answer. He smoothed her hair on the pillow and cautioned Ben not to disturb her. If she wants anything, you take care of her,son. He gave Ben a dime and left.

She let Addie tell her all about it. She didn't even mind if Addie exaggerated; it was better than nothing. She made Addie tell her all about the bride and what happened and who was there. She liked the part about Freddy breaking a wine glass with his shoe. Addie showed her how he stamped on it, hard. Then everybody yelled Mazeltof, which meant good luck.

Then he kissed Anne in front of everybody and they all rushed up to congratulate her and the music started playing a happy song. Addie went into details about the banquet, rolling her eyes and smacking her lips over each course. Beatrice pretended she was jealous, and she was, thinking it was always

her hard luck to miss everything. Now she would have to wait, till God knows when, for another wedding.

Addie's graduation was scheduled on the last Wednesday of the school year. It was agreed that she would meet Beatrice in the yard after the three o'clock dismissal and bring her upstairs to the graduation exercises. Mama and papa were to go straight to the auditorium; they had special tickets marked Parents. That morning, mama combed Addie's hair loose and tied it in the back with a stiff white satin bow. Her white shoes and dress were as fresh and clean as on the day of the wedding. She had her leather autograph book and fountain pen ready. Her flowers had been ordered by papa, a huge bouquet of white roses. Her excitement made her look prettier than usual, a flush covering the delicate tissues molding her cheek bones. She had an important part in the graduation play along with a short opening speech and a dance number with the girls in her class. She kept going over her lines, asking everyone in the family to hear her. Papa had an appointment with the photographer at the Bronx Studio for Addie's graduation pictures. They would go there first and then to school. Beatrice and Ben set off by themselves, hurrying to arrive on their class lines before the whistle blew. Ben was not coming to the graduation. I got a date with the boys, he said, we have to practice for our big game next Saturday. Papa shrugged, he would look for Ben in the park afterwards.

In 2B, graduation was no different from any other day - Miss Willis believed in lessons right to the end. The children fidgeted, their interest distracted by a butterfly outside the window, by a horn honking across the street, by a yell in the hall, by an office messenger, by graduation autograph hunters, by anything. Though they seemed to have more arithmetic examples, more spelling

words, more penmanship, more reading drills, than any day before. They fidgeted, wishing Friday were here and gone.

Beatrice met Ben in the yard for lunch. The teacher on duty had gone out. Immediately, children ran to the drinking fountains to thumb squirt at each other. Then the teacher returned and the school yard lapsed into gloom once more. Lunch hour over, they filed dutifully up the stairs to their respective classrooms and the last long afternoon began.

At three o'clock Beatrice told Miss Willis she was to meet Addie in the yard and the teacher let her remain after the class left. One by one the classes were dismissed. Their noises retreated and the yard grew still till even the echoes of the street faded. Beatrice stood there, beginning to feel frightened. What if Addie forgot? Why didn't she come? She looked around, wondering if there was someone creeping on the stairs, whether someone was hiding behind one of the columns. She cleared her throat; the sound stopped at her ears, went away, came back. Her heart began to beat faster, her knees got tired and trembled. Why didn't mama and papa come down for her? The rules were strict. She had been taught to stay with her class and 2B was allowed to go to the second floor only. If you were caught without a pass by yourself, it meant the principal's office. Her hands grew clammy, wet and cold. What was that? Her fingers went to her mouth, her eyes and ears straining. Why didn't somebody come? They had forgotten all about her, Addie, mama, papa - she was alone and nobody cared. Suddenly she started to cry. Her schoolbag hurt her arm. Angrily, she threw it on the ground, no longer caring what Miss Willis would say. Her crying, begun as an S O S, grew real as she gave up hope. When the janitor finally found her, she could hardly speak. By the time he could make out what she was doing there so late, a door flew open and Addie appeared, breathless with fright. For a

moment, she stared guiltily at Beatrice and the janitor.

I'm her sister, she stammered, I just got through with my speech.

The janitor's face broke into a broad smile. Oho, he said, so that's it, is it! Well! Addie looked at him gratefully; she felt excused.

What are you crying for, she said, stooping to take Beatrice around. Beatrice's gulps grew spaced, her hiccoughs lessened, she found her tongue again.

You pro - mised - to - meet me, she sobbed, I was wait- ing and wait- ing and you didn't - come!

Addie laughed nervously. Then why didn't you come upstairs? You know where the assembly is.

I didn't know - where it was, Beatrice said, her eyes two gleaming slits, you said you - would come for me.

The janitor patted her back. There, there, he said gruffly, kindly, you're all right now. Sure, you were scared not knowing where to go. But your sister's here now, and now you can go to the graduation party, now ain't that nice? Sure. There. You just wash her face and she'll be fine and nobody'll be the wiser. He winked and held up his arm.

Addie took Beatrice to the nearest drinking fountain. She kept laughing, trying to make excuses. Did you think I wouldn't come? Silly! Why, you know mama and papa are here! You'd think you were all alone in the whole building! Dopey, how could you be so stupid? Why didn't you come upstairs and look? Ah you. Her voice was caressing, friendly. Now come on, we'll go upstairs and make believe nothing happened and then you'll see the whole graduation party. She started telling all about it, how the stage was fixed, how all the parents were there, how the girls and boys looked. And wait till you see me

in the Spring Dance! And then we're all getting our diplomas from Mr. Manley and there's going to be prizes and medals and everything! Hurry up, you don't want to miss anything! And I'll even let you have a page in my autograph book! Look, see all the names and sayings I've got already?

Beatrice looked, no longer unhappy. She chose a pink page and began to think of something to say. When they came to the assembly room all trace of her crying was gone. Addie showed her where mama and papa were sitting, then rejoined her class. It was a fine graduation and Beatrice was glad she hadn't missed it. She clapped hard when Addie walked up on the stage to receive her diploma. Later, she saw the 8B girls having their class picture taken in front of the school building. They looked lovely, all dressed in white, carrying flowers and diplomas. Beatrice thought of the wedding she had missed and sighed. Someday she would be graduating, too. Someday she would be a bride. For a moment, she thought enviously of the little girls she had seen wearing communion dresses and veils, but they were too little to look nice that way. Some of the 8B girls were tall. To Beatrice, they looked like young ladies. She admired their pointed shoes, their long dresses and elbow gloves. Some of them had their hair up. 3A-3B-4A-4B-5A-5B-6A-6B-7A-7B-8A-8B - then high school! Gee. She wished she were Addie.

That summer was a mixed one. First of all, for some reason, it was decided that they would stay at home. Beatrice wondered why. She remembered Farmer Sam's promise. She thought of the barn, the fields, the orchard, Daisy. Perhaps they would have gone to Silver Lake again. She could see the cows coming in from pasture, hear the tinkle of the bell for milk time. She ran down to the river in her bathing suit, dug for buried treasure.

Honestly, I'm glad, mama told Mrs. Singer, it's too much trouble. I work for a month before going away and then another month when I come back. It's no joke closing up the house for two months. I'd rather stay home, believe me. And me,said Mrs. Singer. I've been staying home every summer since I can remember. Did you ever see me go away? And what's wrong with my children? Nothing. They can eat and play here just as good as in the country. I always say it's a waste of money. Mama shook her head. When it came to her children's health, money didn't count. But this year, things were different.

To tell you the truth, I'm scared to go anywhere, mama said, all these new diseases you read about. She heaved a worried sigh. There was a terrible epidemic spreading all over - such an awful sound. Better not to think of it. There was always an unknown something, a kind of evil spirit, waiting to see what you were thinking. Why put bad ideas into its head? You never could tell. She changed the subject. We'll have plenty to keep us busy here! Poker games, ice cream parties - leave it to us!

Birdie squeezed Beatrice. I'm so glad you're not going away, she whispered, we'll have lots of fun. Beatrice's face lighted up. Suddenly, she was glad, too. She wouldn't have to leave her house and say goodbye this year.

And I'll have my birthday party at home this time and invite all my friends! They began talking eagerly about the party, what they would eat, who would be asked, what kinds of presents Beatrice would get, what they would wear.

Mama, you have to make me a new dress for my party! Mama shook her off, pretending that she was being choked to death.

You kissing bug you, aren't you ashamed to kiss so much?

I love my mama, too, exclaimed Birdie and timidly ran up for her hug and kiss.

You see, said Mrs. Singer proudly. The children ran downstairs to their favorite corner on the stoop, bent their heads together and began plotting summer fun.

There was a noisy procession up to the roof on July 4th. The hallways filled with neighbors and children, marvelling at Mr. Berger's generosity. He passed out handfuls of firecrackers, punks, shooting stars, whistling rockets.

Upstairs, remember, and careful not to hurt anybody, he repeated. A small American flag was pinned to his button hole. He wore a light suit, distinguishing himself from other papas in rolled sleeves, without ties. It was a bright evening, summery and still over the pale street. Soon it was a ricochet blaze of hissing, exploding, smoking fireworks. Colors wheeled, rioted, sending their beacons to other roofs. It was a mangificent spectacle over 350 Carlton Avenue. Shouts and cheers testified. It was a great day, a great celebration.

Then the days got hot and nobody wanted to do anything and the streets weren't good for anything but frying eggs. Doors were left open day and night, curtains were looped back from the windows, green shades were installed to keep out the sun's rays, ice was constantly being hoisted up the dumbwaiter shaft. The children took to wearing cotton playsuits which barely covered them. Housewives walked about in slips and apron fronts. The men came home carrying their shirts. The tin beach sizzled.

Beatrice grew restless. Why can't we go to the real beach, she complained, why can't we go to the mountains? Why can't we go somewhere?

Why, echoed mama shrilly, why?

Papa came home and slept, Addie sat on Pearlie's fire-escape, Ben played on the lots.

When are you making my party dress? When's my birthday? Mama looked at her threateningly, feeling heckled. Anyway, I want to go to summer school. Mama sent her on an errand to the store. I want to go to summer school, she repeated when she returned.

What, said mama distractedly.

Summer school, mama, said Beatrice impatiently, there's one on Maple Avenue, I saw the children playing in the yard with their teacher.

School, said mama, who ever heard of school in the summer time? You're crazy.

Oh no I'm not, declared Beatrice, I saw it with my own eyes yesterday on my way to the library. The children -

Look, Beatrice, mama's not feeling well, go way like a good little girl and leave her alone, will you?

But ma, mumbled Beatrice. Mama turned away, unlistening. Beatrice left the room, convinced that she would have to do something herself.

The next day she walked up and down outside the school gate, peering through the bars past the yard into open classroom windows. Soon, a group of girls, followed by a young teacher, came out of the building and gathered in the shade of a wall. They sat down on the ground and began passing around a large basket. Beatrice walked by casually, pretending she was counting the bars. They were taking colored twine from the basket. Now that no one was noticing her, Beatrice wondered how she could attract attention. It was so hot where she

was standing and the girls looked so happy sitting in the shade. The teacher saw her and smiled. After a while, one of the girls got up and came over to Beatrice, saying that the teacher said she could join them if she liked. She pointed to an open gate down the street. That way. Beatrice approached the group shyly.

Would you like to play with us, the teacher asked. Beatrice shook her head, suddenly tongue-tied.

The group urged her to say yes. You'll love it here. Look what we're making. Miss Driscoll's awfully nice.

Miss Alice, corrected the young teacher, you can call me that, too, she said to Beatrice. The handwork was explained, then Miss Alice gave Beatrice one of the empty wooden spools and asked which color she would like to begin with. After you have a long enough rope, you can make a rug or anything you want. Here's a finished one. It seemed amazing that it had been made simply by hooking the twine over two metal loops and drawing it through the spool. It was easy work and very pleasant. Soon Beatrice was pulling her yellow rope through the spool and happily asking for more twine. At lunch time, the girls replaced their ropes in the basket and told Beatrice to hurry back in the afternoon. We do lots more things, said the girl who had met her at the gate, and she told her what. Beatrice thanked Miss Alice and said goodbye to her new friends, then skipped home to tell mama all about her new school.

Mama listened to her incredulously. You went in by yourself?

And we call the teacher by her first name! Oh she's so nice, mama, you'd love her. Just think, I'm making a rug for you, mama. I started with yellow but I can have as many colors as I want. And in the afternoon we're going to weave baskets and design pictures with wooden blocks and sew and everything.

Just you wait and see all the things I'm going to make!

Ben said, boy, are you cracked, what do you want to go to school forin vacation time? Not me.

Addie said, oh, she's always showing off, just to be different.

Is that so, said Beatrice, well, let me tell you something, Miss Smarty, there's lots of children there, some even bigger than you, so there!

Hup, snickered Addie, covering her mouth, and then reminded her that she, Addie, was in high school.

Not yet, answered Beatrice, not till next term. Then a quarrel began and mama got mad and Ben hastily finished eating his food and pushed his chair back from the table, saying, aw, ma, you should worry, you know girls, and he made the crazy sign against his head.

So Beatrice went back to summer school and started having a life of her own and the summer days began to fill again. Summer school was fun because she learned many things she had not known before and Miss Alice was like a big sister who always had a smile and a friendly way of making everything easy. She was sweet and patient and good and the children adored her, even those who couldn't hold a needle straight. Also, Beatrice liked knowing that there were things going on that she was part of. It seemed strange that nobody else on Carlton Avenue went to summer school. But that was their look-out.

Now it was mama's turn to ask questions and want to go places and do things. Some vacation, she snorted to papa one evening, I cook and clean and wash and cook and clean and wash every day. What do you think I am, anyway?

Papa grunted. Did I tell you to stay home? For my part you can go to the country tomorrow. Mama took a deep breath and, words failing her, she let it out again slowly. Huh, said papa, you complain. What do I do? Do you see me going anywhere?

You, echoed mama peevishly, I like that! You work and take it easy all day and sleep all night.

Papa's eyes widened roundly. Then he laughed. Sure, I just work all day, that's all. That's a good one.

Mama's mouth creased sideways, missing the joke. You're a man, she said, it's not the same thing at all. The children joined papa in laughing. You know what I mean, blustered mama, not to be put off, I've got the house and the children to take care of all the time, I do the shopping, I prepare the meals, I wash the dishes, every day the same thing. Don't I deserve a change?

So, said papa, I told you to go to the mountains, didn't I? What do you want, money? All right, here, take it. He drew out a fistful of carefully folded bills from his left hand trouser pocket and held it out towards her. Mama surged forward and the children ran to help her.

Take it, ma, don't let him get away with it, he's only fooling you!

Papa's chuckles broadened, exposing the gaps in his jaws. Hey, wait a minute, not so fast, Ididn't mean all of it! Mama sprang away with her prize and papa went after her.

No, no, squealed mama, it's mine, you gave it to me! Papa stood there grinning, watching her count. As the small bills increased in denomination, he made another lunge, but mama turned her back and went on, her count rising hilariously above the children's.

Boy, we can buy the Woolworth Building with that, ma, yelled Ben.

Ma, don't give it back, screamed Addie.

Stop, stop, cried Beatrice, I can't laugh any more! She doubled over, pressing her ribs against her arms.

All right, said papa, how much do you want?

How much, asked mama, wait till I see how much there is!

Papa stood by, his smile now comfortable on his face. Sure, there's a lot, he said, but who said it belongs to me? I've got some of the bakery collections there, what do you think?

Oh yeah, said mama, we'll see about that.

Now, Katie, said papa.

Whee, shouted mama, four hundred and sixty-eight dollars! She threw her arms up and began whirling about the room.

That's what you think, said papa, you can't even count straight. Here, give it to me.

Mama ducked, making the children shield her. Don't let him get it, children, he wants to take it back!

Papa faced four happy warriors and sat down. O. K., you make out the payroll this week, he said.

Never mind, said mama, you'll get more!

Ho sure, said papa, I could rob a bank by Saturday.

Ah go on, braved Addie, you always have a lot of money.

Tell him, coaxed mama, you tell him, Addie. I still don't know how much salary he gets, your father. He gives me my thirty and that's all.

Papa's eyes widened a second time. You used to think ten was a lot not so long ago, he said.

Mama smiled. Sure, years ago, when rent was $15.00 a month.

Oho, said papa, and who pays the rent today as well as all the other bills in this house? You get $30 a week clear.

Never mind, said mama, thirty's little enough these days with all the expenses I have, and the children.

What expenses, quizzed papa, don't I pay all the extras beside?

No, lied mama glibly, elbowing Beatrice and winking.

It's always, Max please this and Max please that and good Lord, I don't know what else for! And yet you say you don't know how much I make a week!

Poor man, she said, I feel sorry for you, the way your wife robs you. Never with a penny in your pocket for yourself. Sure like!

It's the bakery money, I tell you, papa insisted.

Mama snorted. And what do you use for gambling, peanuts? I've never found your pockets empty once, not ever.

Oh, so you look, accused papa.

Who then, asked mama, I'm your wife, no?

I bet you help yourself when I'm not looking, too!

Ha, said mama, don't you know?

Papa nodded. Don't worry, I always know how much is missing. Before I go to sleep, I count. The children giggled as papa wiped his hand over his face.

I'd like to see who else goes around with as much money in his pockets as you do. Almost five hundred dollars in the broad light of day. Why, you're crazy! You could be held up, God forbid, or killed, if anybody knew.

Papa tapped the little holster he wore on his belt. I'm safe. Beatrice shivered, she had seen the shiny black weapon in the drawer. Mama had warned the children not to touch it; there were real bullets inside.

Better no gun and less money, mama said, her lips twitching.

Papa waved his hand in the air. I've been carrying money on me for a long time, it's all right. Nobody goes looking for trouble when a man has one of these babies with him. Again he patted the side of his belt.

Mama made a wry face. You wouldn't even know how to hold the thing, to

say nothing of shooting with it. Where did you ever learn to handle a pistol? Papa looked at her scornfully, not even bothering to answer. Well, anyway, you won't have to worry about this money, mama said and tucked it into her dress front.

Come on, Katie, give it here, a joke's a joke. Papa pursed his lips and held out his hand to her.

What's the matter, isn't it safe with me, demanded mama, I'll take care of it for you, good care. She laughed again.

I bet, said papa, come on. He tapped the back of his hand on the table.

Nothing doing, exclaimed mama, this is for a vacation.

Papa looked at her with a tiring air of patience.

Beatrice, sensing a change in the air, raised a coy finger. Now, pa, that's Indian giving, you know.

Sue, added Ben, getting's keepings in this world. Mama poked them encouragingly from behind.

Ah, come on, pa, be a good sport - you won't miss it - where'll we go - the three children surrounded him. Papa's good humor returned; his mouth gapped open again.

But I tell you the money isn't mine! Cries booed him down. Where do you want to go anyway?

Arverne! Lake George! Woodridge! Camp Winnepoo! Mama, Addie, Beatrice, Ben, each voted.

Sure, all four together, said papa and whirled his finger on the table. What do you think I am, a millionnaire?

We got money in the bank, suggested Ben. Papa jerked his head at him. Huh, what next?

Beatrice nibbled on her thumb; that reminded her. Addie and Ben both had bank books; she didn't. When am I going to have a savings account, she inquired. Papa stroked her face. It's all right, baby, I won't forget you. Comes your birthday, we're starting yours, too.

Mama hushed the children; they were changing the subject too fast. What do you say, Max, I really need the money.

All right, just give that roll back here. You know you don't have to grab. If you want, ask. I'm not Herman Singer, you know! If it's reasonable and I've got it, why good Lord!

Mama sidled up to him. Don't I know, she said, leaning her cheek on his bald head. Papa straightened the bills, moistened his thumb and added quietly.

Four hundred eighty-eight, he announced, I told you you couldn't count straight.

Then the twenty extra is for me, mama beamed. Papa peeled off the top bill and handed it to her; then started to put away the rest. Hey, exclaimed mama, not so fast!

I thought you said the twenty was for you, papa replied innocently, trying to keep a straight face.

Haha, mimicked mama, you thought!

O. K., what do you want? The children sat down to listen. First of all, mama wanted some new clothes, for all of them.

It's too hot to sew, I want to buy them some nice things. If we go to Arverne, the girls will need some pretty dresses and I, well, you know, things I won't have to be ashamed of. You have two weeks in August, we could go then.

But this is July, said Ben, August's a long way off yet, why can't I go to camp till then? Mama silenced him.

Lake George is pretty nice, too, said Addie, I saw some pictures, they've

got good hotels up there and everything.

And what's the matter with Woodridge, put in Beatrice, we had a good time there last year.

Well, if everybody's going to put their two cents in, I guess you won't need me, said papa and got up. Mama told the children to be quiet or leave the room, then coaxed papa into a game of casino while she talked. Mama got her money. It was a successful evening.

Sunday they went to Brighton. It was a long trip in the subway. As usual, Beatrice got sick. They would have to change trains three times. Papa was annoyed. He kept brushing off his white knickers and pulling his shirt away from his body. Mama gave him quick glances, anxious to justify herself. He had wanted to hire a taxi for the day. The trains were crowded, the air stagnant. He tried to sleep, to shut out the discomfort, grumbling about the lunch mama had insisted on taking along, his brood of three, the noisy passengers all around him.

Some fun, he said, when they pushed their way past the impatient door. Mama led the way to the lower platform for the next train.

We'll soon be there, she said. Papa took a turn about on the platform, wondering why he had ever gotten married.

My God, Katie, a man has a day off once a week; he wants to relax, to enjoy himself!

But Max, ten dollars just for a taxi -

What am I earning money for, he demanded. Even a lunch basket, tsk! He eyed it with disgust.

It's all right, said mama confidently, there's nothing like good old home cooking. Wait and see. Papa shook his head and let out a long breath like a whistle. Mama began detailing the nice lunch she had fixed. Papa

threw up his hands. What then, said mama, feed them that hog wash they sell out there? Frankfurters, all kinds of spoiled meat, ugh! Might as well eat poison! She screwed up her face, looking sick.

Papa's eyebrows curled. Talk, talk, talk, that's all you know. Where do you think you are, in the old country? This is America, 1919! He turned to the children. To listen to her, all New York would be dead overnight.

Her, exclaimed mama, that's a fine way to teach them to talk about their mother.

Poison, said papa, why do you talk about things you know absolutely nothing about?

Mama raised herself inside her corset with stiff dignity. That's all right, I know what I'm talking about all right. I know those cheap sidewalk stands, here today, gone tomorrow. What do they care what you put inside you?

Papa snorted. Stands, who's talking about stands? Did you ever see me eat at any stands? What's the matter, aren't there any restaurants for a good meal?

Sure, said mama, another ten dollars, what do you think, a millionaire! And she jerked her head.

Ah you, said papa.

The Brooklyn train rumbled to a grinding halt. Beatrice held her nose, wishing mama wouldn't be so stingy; a taxi would have been nice. Ben scrambled up on the seat, glad to have a window view. It didn't matter how they went so long as they got there.

Swimming's my poison, he told mama, who has to eat, and his eyes ran along the side of the train tracks, on the lookout for the ocean.

Brighton comes before Coney Island, mama explained to Beatrice, it's much nearer.

I don't care, whimpered Beatrice, it's far and you said four more stations a long time ago.

Mama tried to distract her. Look what nice little houses and trees, just like a doll's town. Wouldn't you like to live in such a pretty place? Tell papa, maybe he'll buy us a private house.

Ma, called Addie, isn't Cousin Louis' store near here?

Beatrice jumped up. I knew it, I knew it was far; you said it was near! People looked at her and mama smiled nervously, telling Beatrice it was a shame for a big girl to behave like that and that everybody was looking and what would they think?

They took two rooms at the bath house. Papa and Ben went in one side of the building and mama and the girls went in the other side. Beatrice refused to get undressed in the same room with Addie.

Why, asked mama, what have you got that she hasn't? Aren't we all the same? Addie didn't say anything. She just stood there while mama began pulling off her clothes. Listen, said mama when she saw them standing there looking at each other, I'm going to leave you here and go swimming by myself, I'm not going to wait all day. Addie sat down and started to remove her stockings and shoes.

Then hide me, said Beatrice, getting behind mama. And mama had to stand still until they were safely inside their bathing suits. Then they left the locker, satisfied that neither had had a look.

Mama reported the episode to papa and asked Ben if he needed a private room to himself, too. Ben grinned and said, aw girls, what can you expect?

The beach was less crowded than it had been at Coney Island, and the sand was cleaner, whiter. Mama set their lunch and towels against one of the

breakwater posts and looked around accusingly at the people sitting near. I don't know if it's safe, she told papa out loud. Papa paid no attention to her; he walked away and whistled to a man who was carrying umbrellas. He took a bill out of his grimming belt pocket and motioned the man to set the umbrella up near the water. So mama had to pick everything up and follow him down the beach, her mouth twitching. Beatrice wished the man would open all the umbrellas and let them pick out the prettiest one but he was already digging one into the sand. It was gray with blue stripes. She wrinkled her nose and sat down.

Aw come on, said Ben, what did we come here for anyway? But he had to wait till everyone was ready. The water was as cold as the air was hot. Beatrice toed the edge of the sand timidly. Ben ran in, kicking his legs high, then ducked under a wave. He came up and swung his arm in a curve, calling, come on, the water's warm!

Mama squinted and said, well, who's next? O. K., here I go, and she raised her arms and rushed after Ben saying, hup hup hup.

Beatrice stood there watching them. Come on, Addie, let's take hands and run, she said.

Addie drew back, screaming, don't touch me, don't touch me! Beatrice gave her a look of disgust and drawing breath dashed towards mama and Ben.

Atta girl, Ben cried, come on, I'll teach you to swim! And he floundered and kicked and struck at the water with his hands.

Watch me, said mama and she swam out, blowing her breath like a walrus and circling her arms away from her skirt; her head bobbed above the water-puffed skirt of her bathing suit; then she turned around and came blowing and bobbing back again.

Ben said, ah that's nothing, I can do the dead man's float, and he threw

back his wet hair and suddenly flattened himself below the water's surface.

Papa came in, holding Addie by the hand, saying, dip down, dip down, then you won't feel so cold, but Addie kept shivering and trying to keep herself from getting all wet till a big wave came and washed right over her head. Beatrice laughed and dived after Ben's feet, not scared any more. Then papa held her up to show Addie how to float but Addie couldn't lift her feet out of the water or let her head go back, so papa and mama made a cradle of their hands and Addie held on while the two of them danced her up and down in the waves.

Then the beach got crowded and papa refused to eat on the sand like a bunch of greenhorns, so they all got dressed again and went to a big cafeteria restaurant on the boardwalk and mama got mad because lots of people were eating in their bathing suits and they could have brought their lunch and just ordered drinks like everybody else.

Did you ever, she complained, looking inside, I come to the beach to cool off and be in the water -

All right, all right, don't talk so much, said papa, looking around and thinking.

A perfectly good lunch gone to waste, said mama, and what for, to stand in line and get pushed around by a lot of crazy people? Not me!

Come on, we'll go to Rimsky's, papa decided and turned away from the door.

Rimsky, where's that, I never heard of it - Papa walked ahead, his mind made up. Max, where are you going? What are we going to do with our locker keys? Aren't we coming back? The children ran to catch up with him.

Listen, said papa sternly, who's in charge, you or me? If you are, I'll

take a taxi and go off by myself.

Mama's face darkened with hurt. My God, hasn't a person a right to ask you anything without your getting so mad right away?

Papa's cheeks blew out air in exasperation. Talk, talk, talk, that's all you women know! If I let you start, we'll be here all afternoon making up our minds. Come on! Mama fell behind, telling the children what she thought of him.

Rimsky's was cool, clean and comfortable. The waiter dusted off the fresh tablecloth with his serving napkin and helped mama into a chair. She grumbled an inexpensive thanks, knowing he was looking for a big tip. Papa asked what she wanted and when she made a sour face at the menu, gave the waiter an order for all of them. Then mama started to study the menu carefully and the children helped her to locate the items and prices of papa's order. Papa rested his elbows on the table, drumming his fingers together and staring at the ceiling. He began to whistle a tuneless three note scale, so mama put the menu on the table and started to laugh.

You see what kind of papa you have, she said to the children, he knows the best places. And she patted his hand soothingly.

Hm, papa replied and reached for a glass of water.

He's mad at me, mama whispered loudly and winked. Beatrice watched papa's face questioningly. Mama put her arm around his shoulder and leaned her cheek against him. Excuse me, she said playfully, you're perfectly right to come here, it's very nice, isn't it, children? Papa looked at her and shook his head, wanting to remain disgusted. 'Scuse me, she repeated, pouting her lips. The children giggled.

I don't know why you can't be sensible sometimes, papa began.

I know, mama said, a good sport like you.

What's the use of spending money if you can't enjoy it, he asked.

What's the use, she agreed, patting his hand again. Let's have a good time, then. You know, Max, we could go visit Tabby's mother afterwards. She has a bungalow out here for the summer. Maybe some one will be there. They'll be so glad to see us.

Ben made a disappointed noise. I thought we were going to ride the steeplechase and have some fun on the boardwalk.

We'll talk about it after we eat, said papa, here comes the waiter, now remember. It was a good meal, a so-called light dairy meal; they had potato soup, chopped egg salad, fish, sour cream with cheese, a mixed vegetable plate, strawberry short cake and milk.

When they were finished, mama groaned. I can't move.

I can, Ben said, I could go another strawberry short cake. He got it.

The waiter seemed very satisfied with the bill and the tip and told them to come back again and mama smiled and said, don't worry, we will.

Since they didn't know the bungalow address, papa had to look it up in a telephone book and he came out of the drug store looking pleased with himself. Mama looked at him suspiciously and said, that certainly took you a long time! Papa said yep, I'm going right to sleep when we get there. And he did, a cot in the living-room being all ready for him. Beatrice wandered outside aimlessly, not at all interested in sitting around on the porch, listening to Tabby's mother talk. There were other visitors, all somehow related to Tabby

who didn't look nearly so nice in a cotton housedress as she had the first time Beatrice had met her. Tabby's mother was old and frowsy, with a low cracked voice that stopped for short breaths and continued monotonously for endless sentences. Ben found a marble game up the street and pitched into it easily. Addie sat quietly next to mama, enjoying her place in the grown-up world, as always. Beatrice examined the street carefully, noticing the likeness of every bungalow, the exactness of every lawn, porch, yard, front and back. She didn't like it, she decided; there was something old and smelly about a bungalow; it wasn't like a house. The sand, the wooden walls, the shabby chairs and rooms, the rope lines full of clothes and bathing suits, the way people walked and sat around barefoot and half dressed - there was something about it that made her frown, seeing papa asleep and snoring on the cot in the room alongside the porch. It wasn't the kind of place she would want to sleep in; it disappointed her to see papa resting so comfortably there. She was glad when they left, relieved to hear papa refuse the invitation to stay for supper.

Thanks to Ben, they spent the evening on the boardwalk. Mama had wanted to go home, but /papa said, what's the rush back to the hot city, at least it's cool here. Sure, said mama, you can talk, you slept all afternoon, but I'll have to pay for it tomorrow; they'll be sick in their stomachs and cranky all day. They took the trolley to Coney Island and papa and mama took turns taking the children on different amusements. Ben wanted to go on everything but mama wouldn't let the girls join him on the dangerous ones, like the roller coaster which crashed noisily on the downgrade rails. Beatrice watched dizzily, feeling her insides turn over each time the cars flew down the steep paths. It was worse than being in a swing, she was sure, but Ben came out grinning, saying,

boy, what a ride, swell!

Papa was pale, his cheeks sucked in. Mama laughed and pointed at him. Well, have you had enough? But there was still the carousel and the loop-de-loop and the five of them went together. It was fun seeing mama's and papa's faces rushing past as the horses turned in opposite circles, the outside ones going one way and the inside ones going the other way.

They took a long walk on the boardwalk afterwards. The salt air was lung-filling, the ocean cool-winded. The beach gradually emptied, fewer and fewer people daring the darkening surf. A stray swimmer here and there, a latecomer back from his job in the city - lonely heads bobbed in the water a short distance from shore. Bathing suits gave way to civilian dress, men in trousers and open shirts, women in light dresses and high heels. Old people sat on benches along the boardwalk, watching the passersby. Night was preparing: lights flashed out against the low sky, booths and shops began to stir, voices rose, calling. The children stopped to watch games, excited by prizes. Mama said it was a put-up, a fake, a sheer waste of money, but papa's gambling sense won. Nickel and dime fun, he called it, cheap, and tried his luck. Mama couldn't resist; she seized a handful of coins and soon was squealing over her prizes, a big cupie doll and a box of Whitman chocolates. Then Ben won a cigarette holder and a cane and he marched off proudly, employing both.

You see, mama said, if you were to let me play poker instead of you, we'd be rich by now!

Papa shook his head, oh, sure, I wouldn't have to work anymore. They stopped at a delicatessen store for supper and had hot pastrami, corned beef, tongue, pickles, potato salad, cole slaw and rye bread.

I didn't think we'd ever be hungry again after that lunch, said mama,

and now look at us, starved as wolves! It's the salt air, it's wonderful what it does for your appetite. You sleep and eat like a bear every day. Remember when we stayed at the beach? I got as fat as an elephant and had to open all my dress seams. She chatted away merrily, admiring her cupid doll, the sun-tanned faces around her, the easy-going laughter of the people who came in for their Saturday night sandwiches. Believe me, it's a healthy dog's life, no cares, no worries, no fuss, nothing. You take a furnished bungalow, live in your bathing suit all day long and just eat and sleep and loaf on the beach. Look at Mrs. Stein and Tabby.

You look at them, papa said and Beatrice's face lit up - then he had noticed!

Just the same, said mama, it's a good thing to have a change, be a fish in the water and a cat all the rest of the day.

Sure, some fun, said papa, I'll stay home.

What's the matter, didn't you enjoy yourself today, mama asked.

All right, once in a while, once a year maybe, he said. Mama's face grew sober.

You're right, she said, such a filthy life, sand and wet everywhere, hard beds, ants all over the house, visitors all the time, and when it rains! Honestly, I don't see how people do it, leave perfectly good homes to come out here all summer.

Papa stared at her, then chuckled. All right, everybody, let's call it a day, ready? Ben hurriedly tipped his soda bottle and mama looked around to make sure she had everything with her. At the street corner, papa signaled to a taxi and before mama could argue about it, they were all inside, going home.

There, you see, said mama as the children sank into their seats and stretched their legs out, isn't it better to go home in a taxi than to come here in one? Now we're tired and a taxi will take us home in half the time. After such a day, believe me, I'd rather have a comfortable seat all to myself. Can you imagine the crowds going home in the subway? And she sighed. Then she remembered something. Max, did you fix a flat price in advance?

Beatrice was to have a new dress for her birthday party. For days, she was busy trying it on. Mrs. Singer and Birdie were in and out of the apartment and Beatrice rehearsed with Birdie all the details of the coming party. It was going to be very special this year; eight seemed an important number. To be four meant you were out of the baby class. To be eight meant you were a real person. Her fingers were bigger, she noticed. She could thread a needle better than mama, get hold of things more easily and quicker. Her arms and legs were stronger, her body less chubby. She studied her face, saw the cheeks and jaws and nose growing into separate place, saw the neck line forming under her chin. She insisted on getting a pair of real girl shoes, something with a heel and strap, a narrow toe.

Black patent leather! How long do you think they'll last? You'll spoil your feet in those hot, cracked things!

But they match my dress, mama, don't you know there's a thin black stripe in the plaid?

Mama blinked unknowingly. What black? It's got red and green and white, and maybe some yellow -

You'll see, said Beatrice, and told the salesman, these fit fine, I'll take them. She wanted a new summer hat, too.

What for, asked mama, who wears a hat in the summertime, are you crazy?

I don't care, it's my birthday! You get Addie anything she wants! Can I help it if my birthday comes in the summer? Lots of times we go visiting or something, and I want to have a new outfit.

Mama picked out a white sailor hat with ribbons coming down the back, a round hat with a pompom on top, a straw bonnet with flowers - Beatrice remained adamant, the tam o'shanter would match her dress and shoes.

Three dollars for a kid like you? And it's miles too big! You'll be the laughing stock of the neighborhood! I may be a foolish mother but I'm not crazy yet, come on! They went home without a hat.

Beatrice wouldn't give up; she talked and complained and fretted and grieved until Addie said,take me along, ma, I can pick out a good hat for Beatrice.

Papa said, all right, three dollars, if it's something good, it's worth it.

Can I have a little pocketbook too? Please, papa?

Sure, good old papa softy, he said, when you want a favor you come to me. He spread his paper open to the full page. She brought her head closer so that mama couldn't hear what she was saying. Pest you, he laughed and reached into his side pocket.

No sirree, said mama, she's spoiled enough, give me that money!

It was a lovely outfit; she wished she could wear all of it at her party. The dining-room was hung with paper streamers, the table set with a white cloth, in the center her birthday cake. Mama had set out the cut-glass; they chimed to the thump and ping of fingers. They were filled with fruits and cookies and nuts and candies and raisins. On the piano were the paper hats, baskets, blowers and souvenirs. Beatrice could hardly wait for the party to begin. Each time the doorbell rang, she ran down the long hallway to open the door and see who it was. Slowly the house filled. Elsie Stone and Edna Weaver came in together.

Then Cousin Beatrice arrived with Aunt Ethel and Nettie. Mrs. Hartman brought Celine. Addie invited Parlie Linder and Anna Weaver. Eva and Hattie arrived; they were the only classmates from P. S. 40. Beatrice was disappointed not to see Dick and Lester with them. She wanted boys at the party. So she was glad to see Maurice Rankin come in with his sister Ruth. Then Mrs. Fuller dropped by for a minute, bringing Carl. Everything was going fine. Presents piled up on mama's bed, waiting to be opened. Suddenly Beatrice heard Mrs. Singer's voice. She had almost forgotten Birdie, her best friend! She ran to greet her and then stopped short. Birdie, in a new dress exactly like hers! She hardly heard what Mrs. Singer was saying as she extended a large package towards her.

Mama, she choked, and pointed.

Why did you bother, Mable, said mama, hurrying up to greet her neighbor and smiling reproachfully at the birthday gift. Mama, repeated Beatrice, her finger still pointing at Birdie who stood there timid and uncertain.

Mama smiled and nodded. Isn't that a nice surprise?

Beatrice stepped back, the surprise widening within her like a troubled pool about a stone. Then you knew, she said in a voice hoarse with accusation.

Mrs. Singer's mouth twisted, amused. You should feel proud and happy to see your best friend dressed like a twin.

Copy-cat, copy-cat, shouted Beatrice, anger and abuse overflowing. She pushed Birdie out of her way and ran blindly to her bedroom. Mama had cheated her! Mama had let Mrs. Singer copy her dress on the sly! So that was why Mrs. Singer had asked mama to let Birdie try the dress on! At her own birthday! She felt stripped of glory. Her own party, everybody coming to see her, all her friends - She struck her fists against the bed, kicked and wept.

What's the matter with you? Mama came in softly. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, a girl eight years old behaving like that! Is that the way to treat your guests? Is that the way to act at your own party?

Go 'way, cried Beatrice, you knew about it all the time! She did it on purpose! I hate her, I hate her!

Mama shook her, scolded her, pleaded with her. What will everyone think? They came here to celebrate your party -

Let Birdie take my place, let her have the party, I don't care! She flopped over on Addie's pillow; hers was all wet.

Look what you're doing to your new dress, you're spoiling the pleats and everything.

I don't care, sobbed Beatrice, slapping it with her hand, I'll never wear it again, never!

Mama tried again. Everybody's asking for you. The two little girls from your class, Carl - her voice grew honeyed; she bent down, whispered about the presents, the candles on the cake, the entertainment, all the things for her birthday party. It was no use; nothing could remove the hurt, the insult, the terrible fact of betrayal. Mama gave up and left. In a little while Mrs. Singer came back with her, bringing Birdie.

Beatrice, darling, sweetheart, what's the matter, what have we done so wrong? If mama wanted to wear a dress just like mine, do you think I wouldn't love it? Why, I'd be so proud, that someone liked my dress so much that -

Go 'way, cried Beatrice, go 'way.

Look at Birdie, how disappointed she is. She's almost crying herself. And she brought you such a nice present. All day long, all week long, she's talked about nothing else but Beatrice's party. You know how much she loves you. Isn't she your best friend?

Beatrice stuck her fingers in her ears to shut out Mrs. Singer's voice.

Allright, thundered mama, if that's how you want to be, all right! But remember, this is the last party I'll ever make for you, do you hear? We can have the party without her, that's all!

They left the room and shut the door, Mrs. Singer laughing, saying, can you imagine the troubles children make up?

After a while, her tears grew bitter. Nobody cared where she was. They just wanted a party. Even if she wasn't there. She could hear them blowing on the noisemakers, breaking balloons. She invented a dozen schemes to spoil the party, send them home, give them back their old presents.

There was a knock on the door. She could hear Eva and Hattie calling her. She ran to let them in, then told them all about the mean trick her mother's friend had played on her.

Just because she's my mother's best friend, she thinks Birdie's mine! And she's not, she's my worst enemy, I hate her! Small chinky-eyes! Stupid monkey! I didn't even invite her to my party! Why don't she go home?

Carl stuck his head in, smiling beautifully. Girl secrets? No boys allowed? Beatrice turned her face away, not wanting him to see her tear stained, swollen eyes.

Ah, come on, Bee, you should worry, called Ben, joining Carl in the doorway.

What's the matter, asked Carl. Ben told him. The two talked it over, while Eva and Hattie tried to console Beatrice, saying she should worry, after all it was her party, not Birdie's and that nobody would pay any attention to Birdie's dress, and that everybody wanted Beatrice at the party or they would go home.

That's right, Beatrice, called Carl, I didn't come to see Birdie. Don't

you know you're the prettiest girl on the block? They'd all like to copy you!

So she let mama help her get fixed up again and the party continued as though nothing had happened. She didn't even look at Mrs. Singer and it wasn't until she came to Birdie's present, which she left to the last, that she looked at Birdie. Then all she said was thank you, it's a very pretty doll set, but Mrs. Singer gave Birdie a shove and so the two girls kissed and made up and everybody cheered.

When the refreshments gave out, the older people left and the children played games. By the time papa came home, the party was about over. Mama cleared the dishes, gathered up the papers and streamers and started supper. There were a few last goodbyes and thank yous, then Beatrice walked Eva and Hattie part way down the hill. When she returned to the house, she felt considerably older than she had that morning; she was eight years old. She drew a deep breath.

The heat drew down an August haze from a still sky, made the streets smoky. The days ambled by lacadaisically: they woke early, moved drowsily through the long mornings, argued half-heartedly with the afternoons, felt faintly stirred by the evenings, went to sleep as though drugged, tossed restlessly through the nights, woke early. Summer lethargy was like sky, cloudless, consumed by sun, monotonous, endless. Changeless, except for dates: Saturday the eleventh, Monday the thirteenth. Hours blurred: eight o'clock like ten o'clock, five o'clock like three o'clock. The children sat on stoops and smoked their clay water pipes, blowing soapy bubbles into the still air. Then one day the water hydrant burst, flooding the street. Gallons of water tumbled coldly and whitely onto the hot pavement. In a few moments, playsuits and overalls scrambled towards the waterfall. The street gathered around the happy hydrant, everyone splashing around in the cool of underground wetness. Then the street cleaner came along

and fixed the bolt back on and the water was shut off. The children whispered among themselves then begged him to let them have some more fun, tomorrow. The gray drooping mustaches wagged; he nodded and smiled. So now there were hydrant showers, and then someone thought up a shower on the roof, using a garden sprinkler but Mrs. Sampson put an end to all that because it was a waste of water. Nobody remembered to turn off the tap. It was too hot up there, anyway; feet burned and blistered on the tin beach. So days went back to summer indolence again, until Rudy Valentino appeared as The Shiek. Summer made the desert romantic. A tent was paradise. In the absence of sand and date trees, Beatrice fixed a tent outside the fire escape window, draping a small rug over the rails. It was big enough for a squirrel, said mama, but Beatrice found it just right for secrets. The window shade shut out the view of the apartment. The other side faced empty lots through iron bars. There they held slave auctions, rehearsed love scenes, took turns being sheiks and harem girls. They - Beatrice, Edna, Elsie, Birdie, whoever would come - murmuring remembered movie lines. The days stretched tirelessly, idly, torpidly over the street. The heat grew heavier and more intense. Slow warm rhythms came into the blood.

Often, when supper was over, Beatrice sat down by the window and leaned on her elbows to look out. There wasn't much to see: the familiar rear of the apartment house across the alley, the same gray bricks, the same rows of windows up and down, right and left. Her eyes searched the soft twilight for pictures in her mind; things she had seen, heard, read about. On the ground floor of the neighboring house, a woman sat mending small things with needle and thread. There was something about her that was ageless and forever. Beatrice couldn't tell

whether the woman's hair was gray or brown. She didn't know who the woman was. Day after day, she saw the silhouette framed in the window opposite her. A woman sitting quietly, her head slightly bent over some sewing in her hands - a sock, a shirt, a piece of underwear, an apron perhaps. She did not seem to move. Even when she got up and came back, the interval seemed unreal, as though she were a statue that the eyes had blotted out for a few seconds. Beatrice, sitting at the open window watching her, felt strangely disturbed. Why, she didn't know. Was it that the woman looked unhappy and alone? She didn't think that was it because sometimes a man appeared in the room or the woman turned her head away from the window and seemed to be talking to someone inside. Beatrice stared at her, wondered, fetched a few deep jerky breaths. She didn't know why the picture left her so uneasy, discontent, as though it was she sitting there instead of the woman. And then one day, there was a violent agitation within her. That was it! She stood up, frightened, dismayed. That was it, that she might be in the other's place, darning socks, getting gray, turning into a statue by the window. No! And it was a protest so deep within her, a threat that seemed so sure and near, that she turned abruptly and said, what will I be when I grow up, mama? And mama, not seeing the frown, not hearing the agitation in her voice, laughed and said, why, you'll be rich and educated and have a beautiful house...

Beatrice listened, trying to fit herself into the picture that mama was making of her own wishes and dreams. But what will I be, she insisted, not satisfied with mama's picture. And mama told her what a beautiful young lady she would be and how she would marry a wonderful rich man and have everything she wanted....

Everything she wanted. But what did she want? Her mind traveled the dark

tunnel of the future, not knowing what it would be, where she was going, how it would turn out, and then came back, certain of one thing only - she did not want to be like that woman on the ground floor across the way. NOW she didn't mind looking out of a window; she had nothing else to do, but she had supposed it was because she was still a little girl who had to come upstairs at a certain time, eat supper, go to bed, and do what all the other little children did. But AFTER? To stay here all her life, change into a married woman, have children and a husband, and just sew every day, day after day at the same window, seeing nothing, getting old, being nobody? No, no, no, she told herself, her mind running to all parts of her body to carry the determined assurance. Not like that woman.

Big fears, small fears, there seemed to be no end of them. There was Tillie, the neighborhood idiot, who slouched and shuffled as she walked, with her big tongue hanging out of her mouth! Sillie Tillie, the children cried when they saw her coming, and ran. She was touched in the head, was dumb, was a big-stupid looking girl who could do nothing, whose hands hung in front of her limp and useless! And the papers full of murders, escaped insane criminals, horrible stories of lepers! How could God, who made the world, let such things happen? Why hadn't He drowned everything bad in the Flood? God, who made everything in pairs. God, who made cow and bull, rooster and hen, duck and drake, gander and goose, mare and stallion, boar and sow, boy and girl, Adam and Eve. And then Sillie Tillie. Stupid and smart, someone who murdered and someone to be killed. Everything in pairs, good and bad, night and day, rich and poor, sick and well, ugly and pretty, dark and light. Dark - that worried her. Why were the wicked always dark, in the movies, in books? Witch, she shuddered. She looked at her solid arms and legs, the muscular bulges in them, and frowned, perplexed. Was

it really better to be a nice quiet little girl, to be weak like Addie and as timid as a mouse? Tom-boy - she heard the accusations hurled, saw the deriding fingers pointing. Just be good, mama said, that's all, that's better than being rich or pretty or curly blonde or smart or anything, just be good, then God will love you and protect you and your life will be blessed.

Good. Beatrice didn't have to be told what that meant. It wasn't good to make fun of Sillie Tillie. Supposing God got mad and made her change places with Tillie, how would she like that? And she knew it was good when she helped an old lady carry bundles from the store, when she took a blind man's arm and led him across the gutter to the other side, when she gave her spending money to a beggar. Oh, how happy she was then to run home and tell mama, to see mama smile and sigh in that special way she had, to have mama kiss her and say, God bless you, my dearest child. And then they would get to talking in that private way they had, just the two of them, and mama was so wonderful, no one but mama could understand so beautifully the things that went on inside her.

What happens when we die, mama? Are we changed into stars and dogs and cats and snakes and mice and cockroaches, or do we start living over again in a new person, do we become kings and murderers and beggars and - you know, if you were good you get a good new life and if you were bad you get a bad one?

Mama sighed. I don't know. In the Holy Land, after they bury you, your body disappears, God takes it.

But do you think it happens like I said, Beatrice persisted.

Maybe, mama smiled, remembering old legends. Tales for children, they were, told by the old ones. Did she believe them? For the moment, her mind went back. It was possible that they had lived long ago, many times, in many places.

What were you, Beatrice asked, fathoming.

Once I was a little house girl, mama said, we lived in a big house near the edge of the desert, I took the sheep into the hills and kept them safe from wild animals, I milked the cows and brought water to the house from a big well. Then one day a man in uniform came on a great horse and saw me feeding the chickens and he went up to the house and said he wanted to buy me for the king's kitchen. I was an orphan so they sold me for a bag of gold. Now I cried and was frightened to go with the strange soldier to the king's court.

Were you Queen Esther, interrupted Beatrice.

Wait, said mama, you'll see. So first I was put to work in the kitchen, sweeping floors, washing the yards, carrying the garbage out, even minding the pigs. I was terribly unhappy! Then about a week later, the soldier came back and said, where is the pretty little Jewish girl I brought here, the king needs a new maid for his bedroom. Oh, how excited everyone was, how the cooks and the servants began to fuss over me, begging me to forgive them, to be good to them, telling me what an honor it was to be picked out of so many thousands of girls to be the king's new maid, and I was washed and dressed and prepared all day long for my high promotion. But me? Do you think I was happy? I envied the insects on the ground, the birds in the air! I was brought to my new living quarters in the king's court. Such a beautiful room, full of golden furniture and thick rugs and diamond mirrors and rich curtains. I sat down in a dark corner, waiting and shivering and crying. Oh God, I said, getting down on my knees and praying, please save me, change me into a little spider on the wall, I would rather eat dust and weave my own poor little web than live in this fine room and be shamed by the king. And what do you think? When they came to get me, I wasn't

there any more. They looked all over, they searched and called me, but how could they know I was hiding behind the curtain, spinning my own new life?

Beatrice clapped her hands, tears in her eyes. An orphan, without mother or father, no wonder she had prayed to be a spider! But couldn't you have made the king good and helped a lot of people, like Queen Esther did, she asked sadly, thinking how wonderful it would have been to live in a palace and have everyone look up to you.

Well, you see, that's how it goes, said mama, you think your life is terrible and then when you get a chance to change it,well, you see. Next time, I'll know better maybe, ha?

Mama knew about dreams, too. She didn't like to talk about them; mama was sure dreams had to do with another life, another world. It wasn't good to remember dreams, she said. Better forget them, let them stay where they belong. Sometimes - she shook her head mysteriously. There was the story of the woman who walked in her sleep. Sah, don't let anybody hear. Every night she got out of bed and walked, her eyes closed. Her husband would follow her, frightened, worried, but he knew he mustn't wake her up or talk to her. Otherwise -

What, whispered Beatrice.

Mama bit her finger nervously. She might die or go crazy or become crippled. Ssh.

Go on, what happened?

Well, one night she climbed out the window. Her husband stood there, not knowing what to do, watching. And you know what that woman did? She walked on the telephone wires, just like in the circus. Then she turned around, walked back and got into bed.

My goodness!

God forbid, if he had called to her, she might have been killed. This way - sleep. Who knows?

It was like that with all kinds of dreams. Water was lucky, mama said. When she dreamed of water, she didn't mind remembering. Only falling and fire were bad signs.

And flying, asked Beatrice anxiously. Lately she kept dreaming she could fly. Up to the ceiling, along the street, down the stairs -

Flying, why not, said mama, birds fly. May you always be free as a bird, as swift and good.

But one night mama dreamed of death, and all the next day she cried. She was sure there was a letter on its way, telling who had died.

Someone I know, she said, I haven't heard from my mother in months. You'll see, tomorrow, the next day - we don't dream for nothing. Like the time - mama told about other dreams, other times.

How many lives she must have lived - an Indian, a Chinese princess, an Egyptian slave, a fairy, a tree, a butterfly, maybe a boy, a king's soldier or - What were you when you were a man, mama, you know, once upon a time?

A man, mama repeated, how could that be? Beatrice raised her eyebrows, supposing. Mama thought, then decided. A good kind man like my father, may his soul rest in peace, no one could be a better man.

Beatrice went away, satisfied with mama's answer, but not at all sure of her own. To be like papa, like Ben? Gene - that was her answer, a boy who wasn't afraid to run away from home when he was twelve to travel all over the world! And suddenly her breath seemed to stop. God might have been listening! Maybe that would be her next life, to be a boy like Gene! Her heart knocked loudly under her ribs. Africa, long journeys across the ocean, danger, away

from home, alone. But there was Gene's laughter, the wild way he wore his hair, so tall he was and strong, capturing wild animals, handling snakes, making friends with all kinds of strange people. Give me time, she whispered, give me time, I don't know yet, God.

The nurses attracted her. There was something about them not like other women. It wasn't only their white uniforms, the way they pinned their white caps on top of their hair, there was something else about them, the house they lived in across from the hospital, the way they went back and forth, right past the gate, up the gravelled roadway, into any door of the clinic or main building. Among themselves, walking or talking, they laughed freely, seemed so friendly and natural, but when you looked right at one of them, something happened to make the eyes cold, the face stiff. Beatrice wondered what it was like to be a nurse, to live with other nurses and doctors, to go in and out of the hospital so easily, to know what every sickness was like, to ride in the ambulance, to make bandages and help patients and watch operations and give medicines. That was another world, too, a world so strange and secret that the hospital and the nurses' boarding house might have been a hundred miles away, instead of on the same street. Of course the hospital itself wasn't right on the street like the apartment buildings. It was on the hill, above the stone cliff that began where the street went down. And the watchman at the gate was always there to chase away any children who tried to play in front of it. He'd wave them back with his pipe, saying, g'wan now, you know you can't play here, and he'd point to the sign that said NO NOISE ALLOWED. And aside from sleighing downhill in the winter, or racing a kite there, none of the children did play outside the hospital. But Beatrice often bounced her ball down to the gate. She liked to come there about noon when the nurses changed places, some of them leaving the house, some of them leaving the hospital. It was nice to see them laugh and greet each other,

sometimes meeting as they crossed the street. They walked in groups, their arms around each other's waist, hands linking behind. Some were young and pretty, some tall, some short, some fat, some slim, some dark, some fair. Nurses had fun. One evening she heard a victrola playing in their house and decided they were dancing with the doctors.

It was a nice place to be near, the hospital. You could see the gardens and trees and lawns on the upper slopes behind the gate. Sometimes, a patient could be seen rolling his wheelchair along a path. How nice it would be to sit there, to read or play or even be sick and wheel your chair through the garden. Her ball bounced away towards the gutter. A big black automobile turned slowly into the driveway; it stopped to let her pick up her ball. Beatrice stepped back to watch it ride through the open gateway. She saw a chauffeur at the wheel. Then the car stopped again and a little girl leaned out the back window. She looked at Beatrice and smiled. She had a thin face, with gold rimmed glasses on her eyes, and a gold brace on her teeth. Beatrice turned her head over her shoulder, wondering who the little girl was beckoning to.

girl
Tommy, the little/called, may I get out, please? Just for a minute - She waited until the chauffeur got out and opened her door. She put her arm around the window frame and stood up on the running board. Where do you live? she asked Beatrice politely. Beatrice pointed. What's your name? Beatrice told her.

And yours, asked Beatrice.

Lila Carson, said the little girl, my father owns the hospital, we live there.

In the hospital?

We have a private apartment on the office side, where it says

SUPERINTENDENT, haven't you seen it? Beatrice shook her head. Could you come sometime to play with me? It is all right, don't you think so, Tommy? Mother will say so, won't she?

Beatrice marveled at the little girl's speech. I have to go now, she said cautiously, my mother will be worried. She rolled the ball in her hands, wondering if she should say goodbye.

Will you come again tomorrow, the little girl pleaded. Do say yes, please. I'm sure mother won't mind.

I'll try, said Beatrice hurriedly and waved her hand as she started to run back up the street.

Carson, said mama, testing the name in her mind. What's the matter, haven't you enough friends already. Play here and leave the <u>schicksas</u> alone. Beatrice grew sulky; Jews and Christians, <u>goyim</u> and gentiles - how often she had heard about that! And just when she had an opportunity to see what the hospital was really like. After all, she hadn't been there since she was three years old, a sick baby. Maybe she would see that nice young doctor again. Would he recognize her?

She started on papa as soon as supper was over; he seemed to be in a good mood. The daughter of the superintendent, she said importantly. They have a separate place to live, near the gardens where all the trees are, what do you think, she exclaimed when mama began mentioning all the diseases a child could get there. And she's such a nice little girl, papa, speaks like a teacher and rides in a car with a chauffeur and everything. Her mother gave her permission to invite me and we can play in the garden or under the trees, just like the country, please papa. Papa didn't seem to care one way or another; his

eyebrows went up when mama said Carson wasn't a Jewish name as much as to say what difference does that make? And she looks so lonely, papa, you know how it is, and after all it can't hurt me to keep her company a little while, can it? Papa shrugged his shoulders and started to pare an apple with his pocketknife, his little finger crooked below the stiff joint.

I bet you can't peel one like that, he said and threw the curled strip on the table. It formed a C.

You see, Beatrice shouted, for Carson, mama! It meant she could go.

Next day, mama warned her not to take advantage - once, twice should be enough, don't wait till they call you a pest and throw you out! Beatrice skipped down the street happily, thinking how lucky she was. The watchman remembered her, let her in at the gate and told her how to get to the superintendent's house. By then, she had slowed down and advanced hesitantly towards the building behind the clinic; a few times she paused, wishing Lila would appear before her. What if someone stopped her, took her inside the hospital, undressed her and put her on a long white table? She turned, ready to run back, when she saw the watchman waving at her, pointing where to go. She nodded and continued more quickly towards the garden. Once she was past the gravel road, she breathed more easily, rehearsing what she would say if anyone stopped her. She grew sure of herself again and walked steadily up the broad stone steps to the door. She opened it and went inside. At a desk near the door a nurse sat writing on a card. Beatrice waited till she looked up, then smiled and in a soft clear voice said she had come to play with Lila. The nurse smiled and pointed with her pencil, telling her to go right in that door and then knock on the other door inside. Beatrice thanked her and proceeded. A housemaid in starched tea apron and headpiece answered. Beatrice blinked and asked if Lila was at home.

Yes, miss, will you wait here please? She left the door open and walked away in thin black stockings and shoes. Beatrice waited, wondering if it was going to be like the movies, only real. In a little while, Lila came running lightly across the room. Her eyes shone eagerly behind her glasses and her hands reached to take Beatrice's.

I'm so glad you remembered to come, she said in a childish treble, please come inside, mother wishes to meet you. Beatrice felt constrained; she let herself be led into a pleasant bedroom.

Beatrice Berger? Ah, how do you do, my dear. Lila told me about you. Beatrice shook the extended hand nervously, trying to remember she was neatly dressed and quite presentable. She chose her words carefully, trying to speak like Lila. Mrs. Carson made a few gracious remarks about Beatrice's visit, told Lila what she might do to entertain her guest and left, wishing them both a happy playtime together. Beatrice looked around, marveling at the lovely white bed, the white furniture pieces. There were child pictures on the walls, a crib full of toys in the corner on the floor, a porcelain figure on the low dressing table, a chocolate brown teddy bear in a tiny high chair near the bed, a square table on short legs seating two dolls on opposite chairs - Lila went around showing Beatrice her possessions.

But I'd rather have a friend to play with, she said apologetically, and clasped her hands behind her neck. What would you like to do? You can play with anything you like. I can take the dolls out of the chairs or put the teddy bear somewhere else - oh, here's a nice game.

Beatrice's attention was short; there were so many things to see and do and she couldn't stay long. Lila showed her through the other rooms, then took her into the garden where they had a race to the farthest tree. A nurse passed and

Lila nodded and waved. A bell rattled somewhere and Lila looked at her watch and gasped. Lunch, already! Beatrice wondered if she had forgotten something, if there wasn't something she was supposed to say.

How old are you, she asked.

Nine, and you?

I'll be nine on my next birthday, Beatrice answered, glad that she had one month behind her towards another year.

Will you come again soon? Anytime, you know, morning or afternoon. It's been such fun. Thank you very much! Lila squeezed her hand gratefully. Please don't forget me, she whispered and then turned and ran. When Beatrice looked back, Lila waved to her from the door, her glasses shining in the sunlight.

Summer days lingered. Came mornings, afternoons, Beatrice turned irresistibly towards the private garden on the hill. The watchman let her in with a friendly greeting, more respectful now that he knew she was a welcome visitor at the Carson house. Mama did not seem to mind.

Have a good time, she would ask, when Beatrice returned from one of her short visits.

We played with some dolls, Beatrice said, not mentioning that she had left because the car had called for an afternoon drive, because it was Lila's rest hour, because Mrs. Carson had received some friends for tea. Mama wouldn't understand. All she told mama was that Mrs. Carson was a very nice lady who had a maid and took her meals in the hospital dining-room with the nurses and doctors, that Mr. Carson was a very busy and important man and that Lila wore a brace on her tooth. Then Beatrice described Lila's bedroom, the waiting room, Mrs. Carson's receiving room, and what Lila and her mother wore. Mama was satisfied that there was nothing to the visits.

As long as I know you're safe, that you're behaving yourself like a good

little girl from a nice Jewish family and doing nothing to get into trouble over there, I don't mind. It's hot, anyway, and it's nicer to play in the garden among trees than here. But not too much, remember!

Beatrice nodded; she didn't go every day, and she never stayed away long - mama knew that. But if mama had asked why she went, since there was nothing to the visits, Beatrice couldn't have told her what there was that continued to draw her past the KEEP OUT sign on the hospital gate. For it wasn't the garden and the special privilege she had of being admitted through the gate. Nor was it the presence of the doctors and nurses, since she remained as shy and distant as before when she had seen them only on the street. Nor was it even the fact that Lila's homelife was so different from hers, since she was never asked to go riding in the automobile or to share Lila's rest hour or to do any of the things that made up the differences. She did not question them; she accepted Lila's pattern apart from herself as much as Lila's eyeglasses and the brace on Lila's teeth. And yet, there was something beyond the gate - When she grew restless and considered whether or not to go to the house on the hill, commonplace images arose of picture books, games under trees, playing house with Lila's toys. But she sighed and got ready to go anyhow. There was something there in spite of nothing. Lila's lying down for a prescribed rest period was hardly a matter for envy; Mrs. Carson cautioned Beatrice that there was to be no word spoken between between them, no silly nonsense or laughter, no movement in the room, nothing. Lila lay on her bed, her eyes small and weak without glasses, waiting quietly for the hour to end. Beatrice remained sitting in one of the doll chairs facing the bed, wondering at the curious regime that made a perfectly good hour in the daytime come to a standstill. She felt like a statue, she dared not move, feeling Lila's blurred eyes upon her. And when the hour was up and milk and crackers were brought in by the maid on a tray, it seemed less like a treat than

an apology. It was another part of a program designed for Lila's well being and growth.

One day, Beatrice was invited to stay for lunch. For an hour beforehand, Lila kept urging her mother to speak about it, saying please, mama in a whisper. Since Beatrice had finished a late breakfast that morning, she felt sure mama wouldn't mind if she returned having already eaten lunch, so she accepted the invitation as Lila squeezed her arm and coaxed her to stay. Hand in hand, they walked through the corridor, Mrs. Carson stopping at the superintendent's office for her husband. The four of them then stepped into the elevator and rode down to the basement. It was a large mess hall with white tables and chairs. Some of the nurses were already seated. The Carson's table was at the far end of the room and as they walked towards it there were various greetings and nods. Beatrice took her seat opposite Lila quietly, aware of the severe arrangement of things on the table. Suddenly, she remembered mama's warnings against partaking of strangers' foods, and an uncomfortable flush spread over her body as Lila answered, yes please, mama, to Mrs. Carson's suggestion that they begin with some broth.

Please ma'am, Beatrice gulped, I forgot I'm not allowed to eat anything that isn't Jewish.

Mr. Carson quickly said, why bless you, child, this is a Jewish hospital, and Mrs. Carson smiled and added, it's quite all right, my dear, you can eat anything we do. Lila folded her hands in her lap and smiled, looking from one to another.

Are your people very orthodox, or religious, asked Mr. Carson pleasantly.

Oh yes, replied Beatrice, mama is very kosher. Mrs. Carson patted her hand assuringly.

The broth turned out to be soup, although it was poured into her plate from a tin cup. Beatrice looked relieved, then waited for the others to begin. She sipped the soup timidly, noticing how all three carried the spoon sideways to their lips. It was awkward, irritating then, but she managed to finish at the same time that Lila did, and lay the spoon across her plate in the same position.

Will you please pass the bread, Beatrice, Lila said. The bread plate was at her corner of the table; Beatrice lifted off the top slice and carefully handed it across. Oh no, Beatrice, not like that, it isn't polite to touch the bread. Beatrice replaced the slice uncertainly. That's right, now pick up the whole plate and pass it. Thank you, dear. Mr. Carson coughed violently into his napkin and Mrs. Carson took a drink of water. Beatrice hid her bewilderment under a shy smile. When Mr. Carson asked her to pass the bread, she seized the plate eagerly, grateful for a second chance. During the rest of the meal she followed the Carsons' manners more diligently, using her water glass frequently so that she could observe them unobtrusively. How ignorant she was! She thought of all the meals she had eaten without knowing the correct way of handling spoons, forks and knives. What would mama say if she could see the plates carried off with perfectly good chicken still left on the bones?

But home was home, in spite of everything. There were differences - she saw now what they were - but she couldn't separate herself from those that made up home. A few times she tried: individual settings, use of napkins, finger etiquette . But mama had small patience with borrowed manners.

What do you want, we're Europeans, she said angrily, you'd think we were barbarians or gypsies to hear you talk! All right, so they're Americans. When you grow up you can do things their way if you don't like mine. Did you ever! And things went on as before, with bread soaking up the gravy, with bones sucked clean of meat and marrow, with fingers licked and lips smacked, with tooth-

picks afterwards.

Beatrice sighed. Well, if that was all - She stopped going to the Carson house. Lila's having private tutors, like rest periods and play periods, meant nothing to her. She would have to find some other way.

She returned to her books. There were so many books, so many people, so many lifetimes. Being Beatrice Berger didn't matter. Not being Lila Carson didn't matter. Now, Yesterday, Long Ago - in books time was forever. Through books, a chair in a room in a house on Carlton Avenue was everywhere. Only in books was everything clear. Outside of books it was all mixed up.

Yesterday, her Cousin Emma's little girl would say, we're going to the zoo. Tomorrow, she insisted, I went to Grandma's house. And everybody would laugh, because it seemed so funny to get the words mixed up like that, as though it made no difference.

Beatrice didn't tell how she got mixed up, too. Gold, she would say to herself, that's the sun. Silver's the moon. And then she would have to stop and think which was yellow, which was white. But if there wasn't time, she said silver, pointing to the orange, and the children laughed and told her she had missed; it was gold. And so she could understand how Rosie said yesterday for tomorrow and tomorrow for yesterday. What she couldn't understand was people talking about ten years ago, last winter, when the war started - as though time could be fixed when it happened. Once upon a time was easy to grasp, or long ago, or before. Mama knew how simple it was - when I was a little girl or when Grandpa was alive, before you were born... It made her head ache when people talked about a particular time; it was bad enough to know <u>what</u> things had happened when you weren't there, hard enough to realize that they <u>could</u> have, without being told in such a way that you couldn't understand when they had happened.

That was why she liked fairy tales better than history books; it was so much easier to understand the story of the Flood and Adam and Eve and Moses, than about Columbus and Washington and Lincoln. Ben loved history. It's full of wars and generals, he said, that's why. The more she thought about it, the more convinced she became that story books were like her own idea of time while people's talking was like history. Stories didn't make her feel cheated; she could understand them as well as her memories. It was only when she thought of tomorrow and all the future tomorrows that she felt worried; she didn't want to be cheated later because she didn't know in advance what things were going to happen and whether she was going to be there or anything.

They went away to Arverne for the Labor Day weekend. It was papa's idea. A car came for them and drove them all the way to the resort. They had reservations at the hotel and didn't have to worry about the crowds. They had four days to enjoy the holiday. Emma was so rushed that the whole thing seemed unreal to her.

My hair, she said, my nails, everything at the last minute, and just leaving the house behind -

You look fine, papa told her, just forget everything and have a good time.

The hotel took her breath away, it was so new and up-to-date, so expensive looking. She stared at everybody and was sure everybody was staring at her. Addie was thrilled. She kept calling mama's attention to the details of every woman's wardrobe. For once papa was able to expand without giving mama an itemized account of costs. Wines and liquors were served at the table.

It's on the house, papa said and laughed as he helped himself generously.

Beatrice looked on with flashing, questioning eyes. This was what it meant to be rich: to dress up three times a day, to eat restaurant style, to take long and dignified walks with the family, to sit quietly and proudly in front of strangers, to rest and do nothing all day long - Ben, do you like it here, she whispered, trying to sound casual.

Ben's lips twisted as he shook back his hair and pulled at his tie. It's all right, I guess, for a while, he said and frowned at nothing in particular. She was about to say something, then changed her mind.

It was too cold for swimming so they walked along the boardwalk just to see the ocean. The water looked dangerous, angry, playful, secretive. The waves laughed up at them, splashed skyward to wet the air, came tumbling down with rough unconcern, roared at the beach, shoved off. Sky was gray clouded, heavily outlined. Air blew strongly, full of salt sting. They took off their shoes and raced on the sand, mama having warned them against spoiling their new things on the beach. Gulls raced overhead, screeching in the wind. The children pointed at each other's faces and laughed; red cheeks, blown hair, tie awry, ribbon lopsided; they raced back to the hotel beach front. There was nothing else to do. Nothing. People sat about like cards stacked upended, leaning perilously against each other. One good push -

If that was all, thought Beatrice. Being rich. Mama saying that someday she would have servants, a mink coat and a limousine. If she could have three wishes and the genie came to her. No, she couldn't decide, not yet. She wasn't sure. It was too soon after Lila. She didn't care if they left right away, if they never came back. Papa was the only one who seemed to have a good time there. He played pinnochle, slept in the afternoon, took brisk walks for an

appetite before meals, sat and chatted on the porch about politics and business, seemed perfectly at ease about clothes and strangers and hotel living - yes, papa had a good time there.

And then school began again and they were now in 3A, 6B and first term high school and things seemed strange with Addie gone from the morning walk and noon recess and afternoon dismisnal and Ben getting big and going off with his boy friends, and Beatrice wondered how it was going to be for her, the youngest of the Bergers as Miss Williams called her.

I hope you're as smart as Addie and Ben were, she said and then added, you look like a good little girl. Beatrice tried to like Miss Williams. She was old. Her eyes blinked nervously, twitching the puffy folds over her cheeks. Her words came fast and not too clearly. When she smiled, her mouth went to one side and she hid her teeth. She was fat and slightly lame. Monitors did most of the work. Miss Williams had new monitors every day. She forgot or just picked them out according to the minute's need. When she looked up and jerked her head this way and that, the children knew it was monitor minute. Like marionettes jerked to upright, heads shot back, arms went forward, chests went up. Miss Williams eyed the stiffest and hardest tryingest, then beckoned. Immediately the marionettes collapsed, pupils became boys and girls again. They did a lot of writing work. They filled sheet after sheet with pencilled words and numbers. They copied paragraphs out of their books, from the blackboards. They memorized drills by writing them over and over, column after column. Miss Williams sat at her desk or in her highchair. Occasionally she hobbled up and down the aisles to check the work. Friday was test day in the morning and prize day in the afternoon. Backs and necks and arms grew sore every weekend. But nobody was

absent on Friday. If you didn't come in the morning for the tests, you couldn't compete in the afternoon for the prizes - and no one wanted to miss the prizes. Twenty words written and numbered one thousand times each, correctly, clearly, unmistakably, a nickel. All the arithmetic tables ten times each, another prize. For the best picture copied or traced from the reader, another prize. Get ready, set, go! And thirty-six heads swooped to the challenge.

Stop, Lester wins the arithmetic award - two pencils and a box of rubber bands. Stop, Goldie wins the spelling contest - here's a brand new buffalo, Goldie. Stop, Christine wins the drawing prize - a box of crayons and twenty drawing sheets. A lovely picture, Christine, my dear.

Nobody held back; there was a chance for every one. Flushed and toothless, the champion went up to claim his reward. Miss Williams squinted at the written work analytically. Left out the 450's, Otto, can't skip, you know, hurry back. Times or minus, Amy, which do you mean, a whole sheet spoiled, tsk, tsk. What's this, a horse or a man, where's his head, and the picture is crooked and I don't see the table legs - try again, Mabel.

And by the time the three o'clock bell rang, Miss Williams had finished marking all the test papers, distributed them for homework correction, made several children happy with prizes and worn out thirty-six units of energy.

Beatrice worked hardest for the nickel prizes; she had her own supplies of notebooks, pencils and crayons. When she won twice in succession, Miss Williams gave her a funny book. If you can win in spelling, why can't you win in arithmetic or drawing, she said and to the class, if Beatrice can win twice, why can't some of you win once? Beatrice wished Miss Williams would find some mistake in her numbering or spelling; winning took the fun out of playing; she wished someone

else had won. Hog, someone whispered. Beatrice flicked the tip of her tongue. A jealous cat, that's why. But she dared not look at her accuser, the two nickels burning a hole in her blouse above her heart. She kept stretching her fingers, trying to loosen the joints and ease the aches. A small bump appeared from the pressure of her pencil. My cushion finger, she said and laughed, trying to push it back with her teeth. Her arm trembled and her hand hung loosely at her side. All for a nickel, she thought, what a dope. But she had to be good, had to bring home AAA every month, had to win papa's prizes.

One didn't think, in papa's case, whether it was worth the trouble. You had to come out first and best, that's all. You didn't say dope for winning. It was dope for losing because the shame was so awful. And then sometimes papa could turn up with a surprise that made twice AAA seem hardly enough.

It came in the middle of the term. Papa had been waiting for Addio's report from high school. If all three of you come out good this term, well, you'll see, he kept saying, and they knew he had a special secret because not even mama knew anything about it. Every one tried to guess but he just shook his head and said, it's better than that. And it was. That Saturday he walked in, they stood waiting in the doorway of the dining room to see what he had brought. Disappointed eyes searched him for a sign. He had nothing in his hands. His face looked innocent as he stopped before them. What's the matter, he said quizzically.

Now papa, you know what you promised us today, Beatrice blurted.

Today, he said. Oh, pay day. Well, I don't have to give you your salaries the minute I come in, do I? Addio and Bon examined his face critically, not sure he wasn't fooling.

Papa , what have you got in that pocket, challenged Beatrice.

Papa wheeled aside with a boyish laugh. What do you mean, he said. Where? He looked around, held up his free hand, keeping the concealed one in his pocket away from her.

I know, I know, she cried, it's in there, your other pocket, no the other hand, oh papa please!

Papa's face brightened until it glowed with satisfaction. All right, he said, here goes, now stand back and don't touch it, do you hear? Carefully, a white soft puff ball came out in his hand and was set down on the floor. Beatrice squealed, Ben's face rippled into a grin, Addie's pigtails fell forward. Well, what do you think of him, eh? Papa clucked his tongue and gave a soft whistle. A tiny whimper replied. No one moved.

Oh pa, where did you get him? A puppy, a sweet little darling puppy. Here Whitey, here boy, whsk, whsk. Papa stooped to draw circles with his fingers in front of the dog. A small tail whisked, the ball suddenly lifted and rolled.

Gee, he's smart. Isn't he cute? Oh pa, let me play with him. What'll we call him? Can he be my pet, pa?

Here, Teddy, papa called, come on, Teddy, show'em who you are. Teddy - Teddy? Teddy! Three faint barks answered them. They were enraptured; each wanted to touch his fur, to hold him a minute. Remember, he's just a baby, a few weeks old, you mustn't bother him. All he can do for a while is eat, rest, sleep and get used to his new home, understand? And I want you to know he's no ordinary mutt. No sir. This little fellow is worth money. He's a Vanderbilt French poodle, the best you can find. We've got to take good care of him. He's no gutter dog, you know. They listened dumbly, ready to play nursemaid to the famous poodle pup. Voices dropped to whisper, caution, concern. The poodle looked hungry,

sleepy, lonely, frightened. They let papa decide what to do, willing just to watch. Papa seemed well informed. He lined a man's hat box with soft tissues and cloths, set the poodle gently inside and placed the box in a safe corner. Then he went to the kitchen, heated some milk and funnelled it into a baby's bottle. A tiny rubber nipple was fastened to the neck of the bottle. Papa tested the milk on his hand. Where's mama, he said, she shouldn't be missing this. No one budged. Solemnly they filed behind papa to watch the first feeding. He spread a towel on his lap, lifted the puppy out of the box, and then coaxed the nipple into its mouth. It settled down with a glad cry and soon sank into a deep silence.

Teddy became the household watchword. Teddy was the first word every morning, the last word every night. Everyone wanted to play with Teddy, to watch papa bathe him, to go walking with papa to air him. Only papa knew how to take care of Teddy. Only he was allowed to. And though mama and the children coddled and loved Teddy, it was papa he acknowledged his master. Beatrice fairly swooned over the puppy. Ben fell all over himself trying to teach him tricks. Addie found rough-housing with Teddy the most exciting of safe play. And though mama grumbled over Teddy's slow house-breaking habits, she let him press his small black nose against her cheek and lick it wet. Gone was the morning trouble of getting up early for school. Gone was the worry about returning late. The new reward for any piece of good behavior was Teddy - to curry, comb, feed, sleep with. Papa had a new interest in being home. He heard Teddy's greeting long before he reached the top of the stair. When he left the house, he carried the shrill barks with him. He brought toys for Teddy, a halter, a saddle coat, a special floor cushion. Conversation at meals had to do with Teddy's antics and bright doings. Signs of scratches and bites were signs of guilt. Teddy was

never wrong.

Mama shook her head. You'd think he was a baby, she said. That's how papa treated all of you. Animals and babies, that's all he likes. Just listen to him. That's how he used to bathe you. Did you ever see such a man? Makes a fool of himself over a dog. I don't know, it seems funny to me. To me a dog's a dog and a human being's a human being. And mama shook her head.

Beatrice wasn't really jealous, since she loved the poodle every bit as much as he did. But it did bother her that papa didn't love her as much as he loved Teddy. She wished she could have stayed a baby forever.

Torn stockings, torn papers, missing shoes and pencils, there was daily evidence of a puppy in the house. Mama grew vexed, complained. A new pair of house slippers! Sure, it's only a new set of furniture, who cares? Where shall I hang the curtains, on the ceiling? What do you mean, I gave him his meal not ten minutes ago, and now he stole your steak? Who ever heard of a dog sleeping in bed, were sheets and pillows and mattresses and springs invented for dogs? What next! Teddy this and Teddy that, leave me alone, will you?

The children were happier, noisier and more quarrelsome than ever. While Addie practiced her piano lessons and Ben was at Hebrew school, Beatrice had Teddy to herself. When it was Beatrice's turn to practice, Addie had Teddy. Then when Ben came home, he took Teddy out for a run around the block. By supper time, papa was home and Teddy was his.

Although Teddy was the only dog in the neighborhood, papa insisted on taking him out on a leash and keeping him within arm's reach. He tried to discourage dog-petting. A dog doesn't like to be handled so much, he would say, he wants to be left alone, free. And as though Teddy knew how papa felt about it, he ran along close to his master's heels and showed a fine disdain for calls and whistles.

The white fur grew long and silky; two pointed ears stood up at alert attention; the black eyes matched the spot that was his nose; the bushy tail waved in the air like a friendly flag. Papa kept him small.

Lap-dog size is apartment size, he said, and from time to time fed the dog small doses of whiskey.

Papa's interest in pets expanded. He brought home a canary one day and set the cage stand in a corner of his room. It was a lovely stand, polished brass in slim simple curves. The cage hung in a semi arch high off the ground; it was neatly wired, spacious within, equipped with porcelain feeding trays, water trough, beak sharpener, swinging perch and a gravelled floor tray which papa could remove to clean.

What do you need it for, Max, mama asked, eyeing the yellow dart that fluttered and peeped from bar to bar.

A lot you know, he said and turned to whistle a scale to the bird. He made a space in the kitchen closet for pet supplies andneatly arranged tins and boxes on the shelf, birdseed in one, dog biscuits in another, flea powder in a bottle, special vet products recommended to him at the pet shop. When the bird grew accustomed to his new home, to the morning regime of cage cleaning, baths and fresh seed, to the whistling of papa and the barking of Teddy and the voices of children, he began to sing. Papa woke enchanted. A concert, a morning serenade, just listen to him! And he replied with staccato whistles, occasionally sucking in air through puckered lips and calling, Peetee Peetee Peetee. Papa was glad to get up early to attend to the bird and the dog, glad to have them rely on him, glad for himself.

Soon after, he arrived with a fish bowl and placed it between the radiator and the window at one end of the dining room.

My God, Max, are you starting a zoo, mama asked. The bowl,like the cage,

rested on an elaborate stand; it had a heavy copper base fitted to a fluted column that curved into prongs for holding the glass firm. Inside were colored pebbles, a miniature deep-sea setting of tunneled rock and plant life, a white coral shrub, an interesting arrangement of sea shells, and the beginnings of a tropical collection of fish. As papa grew adept at conditioning the fish life to the room and water temperature and special food, he enlarged his marine family. The black one he called Tiger, the elongated yellow one Big Eyes, the others Rainbow, Sunny, Alice and Sonny Boy. They were beautiful creatures, swift or slow-moving according to whims of light and water, always dignified, always graceful. Beatrice loved to watch them swimming up, down, back, forth, round and round. Eyes unblinking, mouths a steady pulse, fins slightly waving to and fro, their tails like fans swirling the water. Did they never sleep? Did they never get tired of moving? Something in papa's face, the secret bond he shared with the fish, made her silent with wonder. How carefully he changed the water, measured out the powdered grain, watched for danger signs.

You must never feed them too much. Tiger's been acting funny, maybe he's sick. Someone's been playing around here. Remember, the window and the radiator must be left just as I fix them. And when Tiger and later Rainbow and Sonny Boy died, she saw how unbeautiful the fish were out of water, the colors dull, the fins stiff and dry, the change to death ugly. I can't understand it at all, papa said, dismayed, I've followed directions perfectly. Someone's been fooling around, that's all. And at breakfast, he scolded the family for the death of his fish, saying they didn't cost peanuts to replace.

Then there was another canary in another cage, smaller, but a better singer than the first one. And papa kept replacing and adding to his fish; mama complaining about the waste of money and the extra work in the house. And then papa

brought home a duck and tied it to a string in the bathroom and mama said he had gone crazy altogether, and if he thought she wouldn't cook it - ! Anyway, it was fun watching the duck swim around in the bathtub, although Beatrice was afraid to use the toilet because the duck was so big and its yellow bill looked sharp and it made a lot of noise with its wings and feet against the walls and the tile floor. But next day papa didn't object to mama's cooking it because a house wasn't a farm, as he could see, and after all a bathroom was no place for a duck. So mama roasted a stuffed duck for Friday dinner and everyone felt a bit embarrassed and sorry for papa because they were eating duck soup and duck dinner with duck gravy and everything.

Mama tried to cheer him up. Next thing you know, you'll be bringing a horse here - he can sleep on the piano.

Why not a monkey, cried Beatrice and papa smiled sheepishly and said he had three monkeys, already, but they could tell he wasn't happy. He said that someone at the office had given him the duck as a present. It was good but no one enjoyed it. They kept looking sad and pretending it was funny. So papa didn't bring home any more pets and they just had fish and canaries and Teddy.

That Fall, things went smoothly for all of them. Addie seemed to like high school, Ben was behaving himself for Miss Carey because he had a crush on her, Beatrice did her work faithfully, mama was feeling well, papa was making money and his downtown dates weren't causing any trouble. Now that the children were growing up, mama began to buy ready made clothes and to cut down on housework. She took to playing cards until it became a habit; she never missed a game if she could possibly help it. Six or seven women usually managed to get together once a day, either in the afternoon or in the evening. Soon the children were playing with chips, making the blue ones dimes, the red ones nickels and the white ones pennies. When they tired of casino, there was poker. When they tired of open -

there was close. Also they played fan-tan, whist, twenty-one, slap-jack, and queens. Then Ben taught Beatrice pinnochle and papa was amused to see the two bidding so seriously.

It's in the blood, Beatrice repeated, hearing mama say that some people couldn't stop playing cards any more than others could stop betting on horses or drinking or smoking. I'm a gambler, she told herself viciously and felt excited when the stakes were raised and cards turned out straight, flush, full-house or three aces.

Then Mrs. Weaver complained to mama about Edna's nail chewing habit and said that she didn't know what to do to break it. How did you get Beatrice to stop?

Believe me, said mama, I tried everything, but if a child doesn't want to stop by herself, it's no use. Look at my Ben, almost twelve, still sucks his thumb behind his tie!

Mrs. Weaver shook her head. I wish you'd stop Edna, Beatrice, her hands look terrible.

So Beatrice promised she would and next time she saw Edna, she looked at her nails. Edna, aren't you ashamed! She shuddered. There were hardly any nails left on the fingers, just crude flesh in tiny knolls above a hard, sore nail stump, chewed and red looking.

Edna hid her hands behind her back and blinked nervously. I can't help it, she said and blinked again.

Do you want to stop, asked Beatrice. Edna shook her head. All right, I'll tell you what, everytime I see you biting your nails, I'll put my fingers in my mouth - that'll show you how funny you look and you'll stop. They started

practicing right away. Every day after that, Beatrice stopped to examine Edna's nails. At the end of a week, Edna had two about half grown in. You've bitten the others, that's why, exclaimed Beatrice. Now leave these two grow next week and these two the week after and soon you'll have all your nails back again just like mine. And they compared their nails and Edna agreed, laughing nervously.

Sometimes Beatrice got mad at Enda because she wouldn't pay attention to the signal. Just this little corner, Edna would mumble, turning aside.

All right, said Beatrice, then I'll chew mine off, too, and she proceeded to nibble on her own fingers.

Mama was aghast. What are you doing, she demanded. Beatrice laughed and explained it was only a joke; she did it on purpose to break Edna of the habit. Did you ever! She breaks Edna of the habit and now chews her own nails!

That's not true! I don't really bite my nails off, look, I just keep them short, that's all.

It was mostly in the movies that she did it. She never knew when it happened. Another nail, tsk. And she tried to hide it until she could cut it or file it so that mama wouldn't know. She wished she could ask Edna to help her now, but of course Edna wouldn't because she was so proud of her hard flat nails which she tapped against wood to make a scratching sound. Sometimes she chewed so deeply, her fingers throbbed with pain. But how could she help it? The darkness, the suspense, the sadness or excitement of the movie were so real, she had to stifle her mouth with her fingers. Once, when mum and Addie were sitting next to her, she almost chewed her fingers to pieces. Over the Hill, the picture was called. How sad it was, how terribly sad. All over the theatre, people were blowing their noses and wiping their eyes. Even men and boys. Mama kept sniffing and Addie kept twisting her mouth with her finger knuckles. Mama must have

talked about that picture for weeks. It was so true to life, she said.

After all their parents have done for them, after all the sacrifices - the children grow up, become rich, go away and forget. They're ashamed of their poor, old fashioned parents. They try to hide them. The mother's nothing but a servant. That's how it is, until the parents go to an old folks' home, out of the way and forgotten, as though they were dead.

Beatrice was shocked. How could such things be? She would never get married and leave mama andpapa! When she grew up, she would do everything to make them happy! She would never let them go over the hill to the poor house! How could children be so bad and treat their parents like servants? The movie images reflashed: the children grown up and successful, having rich parties for their friends; the old parents unwanted and out of place, finally being sent away to a home for the aged. Her heart wept in pity and anguish; her sleep was tossed by dreams. No wonder mama sang such sad songs, always the same wailing themes. The good, hard-working father became gray and stooped, the mother became worn out and sick, the children became doctors, lawyers, important business men, they married into rich families and enjoyed easy lives, none of them caring to help, the parents having to beg favors, even for bread and rent, everything gone, the past forgotten, the children selfish and mean. Ah, the cruelty!

Papa shook his head, looked grim. It's all right, he said, I'll take care of myself. I don't intend to come to my children for anything. I'll work as long as I can, save what I can, and then, when it's over, it's over, finish - He made a hissing sound and snapped his fingers.

Beatrice's eyes darkened. What did he mean? Papa poor? Mama old and sick? Never! It couldn't be! And yet, the way they looked at each other, papa's face so hard, mama's so troubled and sad - Beatrice looked at Ben, at Addie; they sat quietly, feeling, she was sure, the way she did. Assurance rippled

through her, bringing relief. No, not Ben, no matter how rich and successful he became. Not even Addie, selfish and mean as she could sometimes be. Addie's love for mama and papa was beyond question; she was good and obedient, whatever else she wasn't; Addie would always be loyal, too. Beatrice let out a laugh. It's only a movie, she said.

And whenever mama quarreled with papa about Grandma Theresa, Beatrice remembered the picture and smiled.

What does she need so much money for, a woman her age, and diamonds, too, did you ever? What's the matter, hasn't she a nice home and everything? Max this, Max that, what does she want, the whole world? Papa laughed. You laugh! My God, you'd think she was the Queen of I don't know what, the way you spoil her. Cream for her face and lemon for her hands and satin petticoats and now diamond earrings.

What's the matter, you jealous, papa asked goodnaturedly.

Jealous, sure I'm jealous, why shouldn't I be? Beatrice giggled, thinking of Grandma's false teeth, brown wig and old lady's clothes. Mama silenced her with a look. With my mother, it was a different story or have you forgotten?

Papa snorted. What do you mean? She had her own children to take care of her.

That's all right, mama said, she was my mother while she was living here, and she didn't ask for money or diamonds, either.

Poor thing, I treated her something awful, didn't I, papa said mockingly. Mama shook her head as though to say she knew what she knew about that. Who supported her for the seven years she was with us and paid for her ticket both ways, eh? Papa cocked his head to one side, giving the words time to sink in.

Did I ever say you didn't? How many times do I have to thank you for it,

till I die? But she wasn't with us those seven years, please! I wanted her to live with us but you said she was better off with my cousins, remember? Maybe you've forgotten, I haven't. But we're not talking about my mother, we're talking about yours. One, two, three, and you're ready to change the subject. My mother! You sent her back, didn't you? All right, then leave her out of this. Did you ever? No matter what I'm talking about, he has to bring in my mother. Mama took a long breath, anger having cut it short.

Listen, said papa, you can spare yourself the trouble about my mother, as far as I'm concerned you don't have to love her, she should worry. He shrugged his shoulders.

Mama flushed uncomfortably. That's a fine thing to say in front of your child! What's the matter, have I ever insulted your mother? Don't I always treat her with respect? As God is my witness, I've never even opened my mouth against her, either to her face or behind her. You make me out to be a fine daughter-in-law! My God, I wish her years of health and the best of everything! I was only saying she has more than one son and that enough's enough, that's all.

Never mind, papa said, I have it and my brother hasn't. The old lady's not going to live forever, and while she's here, well, she's my mother, I don't need or ask anyone's advice. It's my money that I've earned and I'll do as I please with it, understand? And papa was so calm, so sure of himself, that mama lost the argument every time. The facts were familiar: Grandma Theresa was a strong headed old lady and papa was her son, both were proud, clever and superior, like a king with his queen mother, each certain of his relation to the other. So papa continued giving his mother what she wanted, keeping his transactions private, and mama continued sending small monthly sums to her mother,

and Beatrice smiled, remembering the picture.

It wasn't that mama objected to goodness, either in principle or in practice. Beatrice knew that because mama was goodness herself, good to neighbors, good to her children, always ready to help and sympathize, to share another's burden. What she had learned about goodness, she had learned from mama. But then, papa was good, too. Beatrice thought hard, trying to see where the trouble lay. Why did papa's goodness make mama mad? Was papa wrong in giving Grandma Theresa money and presents? How could it be wrong when she was his mother? Mama said he lent money to everybody and then never got it back. But did that make papa bad, or the people who didn't pay the money back? Mama said he paid rent not only for his own family but for other people, too. But wasn't it good to help poor people by paying their rent? Mama said he was forever getting mixed up in other people's business and having to get them out of trouble, like the time the Oberman boy almost went to jail or when Mr. Ludlow was accused of selling stolen goods, and papa saved them by signing papers and putting up money for them. Beatrice thought that was being very good; she felt proud when she heard such things about papa. Once Mr. Schumann came to the house because the men were striking and papa fixed things right away by calling the men together and hearing their complaints and settling better hours and wages for them, and both Mr. Schumann and the men thanked papa and went away satisfied. Only mama didn't seem satisfied with papa's goodness; she said he did everything just to show off. Beatrice wondered. Maybe he did but if he was good, did it matter why? To be good, what else! And the tense frown disappeared. Then they were both good, mama in her way and papa in his. Good, that was all. Then

let them quarrel and disagree. Beatrice listened and always took sides with the good one on the side of goodness because that was the right side always.

Even Teddy knew that. He was only a dog, mama said, only a young puppy, but how smart. When the children had a fight, he barked and ran from one to the other, as though he were trying to stop them. If someone got hurt, if there were tears, Teddy came whimpering, wanting to share, to console. How often he curled his paws around Beatrice's neck, his tongue warm and wet on her cheek. Oh Teddy, you're so good, you're my best friend, she would say. Scratches and bites were forgotten, quickly forgiven. Teddy tickling bare toes, Teddy burying his cold black nose in the warm palm of your hand, Teddy leaping into the book on your lap, Teddy sitting on the floor and listening to you talk and thumping his tail and trying to understand and reply, Teddy stealing into your bed at night or secretly begging for food under the table - that was the real Teddy, his black eyes looking clearly into yours, knowing you, trusting you. Yes, Teddy knew what goodness was, knew each one's worth and short-comings. And Teddy could be sad, afraid, angry; sensing the mood, the disturbances in the house. Teddy fitted himself to each occasion: hiding under the bed; lying quietly and apart; growling and jumping; moving questioningly from one to another, seeking solution to the human puzzle. He was only a dog, mama said, but Beatrice knew that Teddy had a soul, that something inside was alive and feeling, that knew when things went wrong, that understood good and bad. And there was no one who could take his place, no one who could be true and kind and sympathetic and always by your side when you felt cut-off. Teddy was Teddy and Beatrice loved him.

For Christmas she bought him a small stuffed dog, black, with a white nose. Teddy backed away, unable to make out whether it was alive like him or a small imitation. He barked at it, challenging it to move, then cautiously trotted

across the room, sniffing. Beatrice laughed and hugged them together. Soon Teddy was wagging his tail, pawing his wooly friend and leaping and running around with him. After that, the two became inseperable. Maybe Teddy needed his consolation, too.

That same Christmas, Beatrice asked for a diary and got one. It was a nice fat book, covered in green leather, and had a page for every day in the year, each with the month and name and date on it. It was just like Addie's graduation autograph book, only bigger. And besides, it was for her to write in all by herself. She was thrilled. It was her first real book, not for school or lessons or anything else but herself. She could write in it and not show it to anyone. It would be her secret diary which only she could read. She would keep it hidden in a safe place, at the bottom of the linen drawer in mama's bedroom. No one would ever look for it there. She could hardly wait to write on the first page. She would write a letter to her diary and wish it a happy new year. She filled in her name and address and age and class, then studied the facts on the inside cover with admiration. When she put it away, she kissed it and said, now you belong to me.

Mama and papa had a party for their friends on New Year's Eve. There were two tables arranged for cards, a small one for pinnochle and the big one for poker. Mama borrowed some extra chairs to seat twelve. The kitchen was all ready for the midnight supper: pots full of food to be heated just before serving, the ice box full of sodas, seltzer, beer, champagne, chilled salads and pickles and olives; the table set out with fruit, nuts, raisins, chocolates, mints, a frosted layer cake and a dish piled high with mama's special strudel, the cupboard

counter stacked with silver and dishes, the space adjoining the sink with glasses. The banquet cloth with a dozen napkins was ready to be spread over the two tables joined lengthwise. The children were warned not to disturb anything.

Ain't we gonna get something to eat, too, Ben demanded, anticipating a midnight appetite. Mama shook her head and winked, as much as to say, leave it to me. Ben smiled. We can sneak in here while they're eating inside, huh, he confided.

Papa agreed to let them stay up, on condition that they remained in their bedroom until it was time to eat, so they went to bed at ten o'clock to wait. Addie and Beatrice chatted amiably while Ben tried to read, but yawns gradually intervened and the light bothered their eyes.

Aa, I won't fall asleep, he said, I'll wake you, and anyway we'll hear a lot of noise at New Year's.

It was mama who woke them, standing most mama-like under the light, her face glowing and watchful as one by one sleepy eyes fluttered, opened and drooped back, then startled awake. Shouts of laughter came from the dining-room. Outside, the din of horns and noise-makers grew louder. Church bells clanged. Mama kissed them, they kissed each other. Happy New Year! Addie's kiss was a dry peck, Ben's warm and full.

You winning, Beatrice asked eagerly. Mama nodded and put her finger on her lips.

The evening's young, she whispered, if I can just keep my luck - but papa, I don't know, sh. Papa's stride into the room was an assurance. He kissed them and gave each a five dollar gold piece. Is it going so good, ha, asked mama jokingly.

Papa chuckled. Some pinnochle players! It's like taking candy from a baby!

Good, said mama, keep it up. But I can't leave the guests so long. You children wait here, I'll bring you something to eat right away.

Don't forget pickles, ma, called Addie.

And I want some fricassee and hallaschkes, added Beatrice.

Me, I want everything, yelled Ben and stretched happily.

Instead, mama brought them milk, cake, sandwiches and a dish of mixed sweets. Tomorrow, she said, you can have all the left overs, guests come first.

Yeah, grumbled Ben, they'll eat everything and leave nothing for us, I know.

Don't worry, there's plenty, eat and enjoy yourselves like good children and then go to sleep, you hear? They reached greedily for the plate. Wish me luck, reminded mama and hurried back to her supper and cards.

The world was white on New Year's Day and the children romped in the first snowfall of winter. It was like the first page in her diary, white and ready for beginning. Beatrice sat for an hour, not knowing what to write in it. She wanted it to be perfect. She had a new penpoint and she licked it till it shone. She practiced dipping it in ink and trying it out on a paper bag. Finally, she wrote: Dear Diary, Today is Jan. 1, 1920. Happy New Year. It is snowing. I hope you had a merry xmas. We had a nice party last night. Now I am going out to play. Goodbye. Please keep my secrets. Love from your friend, Beatrice. She had to crowd her name at the bottom. Her writing slanted down one side of the page. It was hard to write without lines; she decided to rule some in pencil tomorrow.

Teddy loved the snow; he ran around, leaving green puddles behind him.

The flying snowballs excited him; he dashed after them. Then the sun came out and threatened to melt the snow. The children watched, waited, muttered. Just when we have a holiday. Yeah, and tomorrow when we're in school, I bet it'll be swell. They went over to the lots where the snow looked thicker. The street thawed peacefully.

And then it was promotion time again and for Ben it was his last year of being a child because next year he would be thirteen and have his barmitzvah and papa promised him a gold watch if he finished his studies at Hebrew school. Ben was pleased with his twenty dollar gold piece present and showed it to all his friends. He added it to his bank account and felt very proud when he saw it entered into his savings book. Now he had close to three thousand dollars.

To study medicine and be a doctor, mama said. He looked happy over the prospect. Dr. Benjamin Berger, mama said.

Ben laughed. Aa, Ben's good enough, he said.

Mama corrected him. A doctor has to be dignified, she said.

Maybe, Ben answered, but if my friends don't like me as Ben, they can go to another doctor. And he went off whistling, feeling quite satisfied and independent.

Ben went into 7A, Beatrice into 3B and Addie into the second term of high school. Papa said the 1920's would be the best years of the 20th Century and mama sighed and said, I hope so, and knocked wood.

Ben explained why to Beatrice. The 20th Century means the twenties, see? She didn't understand. Look, dope, this is 1920, right? All right, and what's next year? 1921. Sure, and then 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, see? We're gonna get rich, kid, rich!

Beatrice went away to think about it. She counted the years on her fingers.

Ten. That meant she would be eighteen by then. The idea scared her. Eighteen, why that was a lady, like Margaret and Edith Weaver, like Louise and Beulah Stone! She ran in to ask mama how old they were.

Margaret? Her mother says she's twenty-four, but I think she's almost thirty. Let me see, when I moved here -

Beatrice interrupted. How old are you, mama?

Mama stopped short. Me? Why?

I just want to know, just because, Beatrice said.

Mama had to think a minute. In April I'll be - she frowned - thirty nine. Goodness! But I have three children, thank God. How can you compare me to Margaret, an old maid who goes to business every day and -

It's all right, said Beatrice, I just wanted to know.

Now don't tell her I said so! And don't tell anybody how old I am, you hear? But Beatrice was gone.

Mrs. Lane was a nice, quiet teacher - small, her hair braided around her head, her eyes pleasant but aloof. She seemed very young after Miss Williams and it was fun playing with her at recess time. She was very friendly with the other teachers and always stopped to chat with them, in the hall, on the stairway, in the yard, wherever they happened to meet. There wasn't so much writing work that term. Mrs. Lane made them recite a lot. They did examples on the blackboard and had many flash card drills and chart exercises. Mrs. Lane taught them history by telling them little stories: about Marco Polo who traveled all the way to China and came back to Italy with all kinds of things the people had never seen or known about before, about King Richard the Lion-Hearted who went on a crusade to the Holy Land and fought the Turks like a lion, about Lief Ericsson who was a Viking and crossed the Atlantic Ocean in the days before

big ships, about the men who explored the world trying to find a short passage to India. Beatrice liked Mrs. Lane's voice; she talked quietly, seriously, and when she finished the story, she smiled and asked if there were any questions. Then, since there weren't any, they were told to turn to the story in their readers and, when they finished, to find the answers to the questions at the end. Beatrice thought the lessons were very grown-up with Mrs. Lane and she liked being in her class. Then Mr. Lansing divided the school into two parts for assemblies, one for the upper grades and one for the lower grades, and Mrs. Lane played the piano for the 1A - 3B's, so Beatrice didn't mind too much being with the babies, though she wished she were in 4A having assembly with the big children of the school.

That term, Ben got into a lot of trouble with Miss Pound, a big, fat teacher with gray hair and a deep voice who sat at her desk and threw blackboard erasers at the bad boys. Ben was always asking Beatrice to help him get the chalk dust out of his hair and suit. Sometimes he had fingerprints on his face and because he didn't want mama or papa to see them, he kept pinching and slap - ping his face all the way home so that Miss Pound's marks wouldn't show.

Boy, she sure can wallop, he would say. But he wasn't really mad at her because she treated all the boys rough. Ben said she hit him for laughing at her. I wasn't laughing at her, I was just laughing, you know. Boy, you should have seen her run after me, all over the room. Some fun. And then, pam!

Beatrice could imagine it; she knew how Ben could laugh, all right, without stopping. How many times she had seen him make papa angry! Did you see my fountain pen - I just laid it here - not a minute ago - and papa would look at Ben and Ben would begin to laugh, saying he didn't take it, and because he laughed, papa would think he was trying to be funny and then get mad because Ben

laughed harder than ever, till papa was sure Ben had the pen and was just making a fool of him. Then mama would find the pen under the fringe of the rug and say, here, why don't you look? And Ben would laugh so hard that tears ran from his eyes. So she could imagine Miss Pound running after him to make him stop.

Twice, Miss Pound sent for Beatrice to tell her how bad Ben was, but she could tell Miss Pound wasn't mad because Ben just stood there with an exasperated grin on his face while the class giggled.

Miss Pound seemed to enjoy it. Are you going to tell papa? Beatrice looked away, without answering. Papa spank, hey? And then, you'd be a tattle tale - Miss Pound's voice boomed goodnaturedly. She caught Beatrice to her bosom and hugged her. I wish Ben was as nice as you, she said. Ben's mouth twisted to one side. You going to come to my class in a few terms? Beatrice shook her head, not too enthusiastically. The class laughed. Why, don't you like me? Miss Pound looked around fiercely. Do I ever touch the girls? No, yelled the class. Don't you love me, girls? Yes, they called laughingly. And you, boys? You bet, sure we do! Ben and Beatrice looked at each other; they didn't have to ask.

It was all right. Miss Pound was a good sport. She didn't send for papa. Ben knew what would happen if she did. And if his conduct wasn't A, his work was. And he did have the best handwriting in the class. He was very proud of that, anyway.

That Easter, papa bought five seats for the services in the synagogue. He said it was about time for Beatrice to attend. At first she didn't mind. It made her feel important to be there with all the grown ups. She wore a hat and had her own little prayer book and stood up and sat down whenever the congregation did. But after a while, she couldn't understand what it was all about. There was a continuous babbling all around her. Now the rabbi in white prayed, then the other rabbis in black began, then a group of men on the platform raised their

voices, then everybody took up the chant. The horn blew, the Torah was carried from one place to another. The women struck their chests with their right hands clenched. The men swayed back and forth, side to side. The murmur went on and on, some voices louder than the rest. The cantor sang in a high, minor key. Here and there someone wept, blew into a handkerchief. The air in the temple grew stuffy. The small print in her book blurred. She yawned and wished it would end. From time to time, papa prompted her, turned the pages in her prayer book to show her the place. He let mama coach Addie. Ben moved along by himself, having been instructed in Hebrew school.

I'm going to start you next term, papa said, a girl your age should be reading Hebrew by now.

Beatrice stared at her book, listened to the voices around her. What for, she asked herself. If there was only one God and He was the God for all people, then why did she have to learn Hebrew? God listened to everybody's prayers, in Chinese, in French, in German. So why not in English? And if He was ~~him~~ only the God of the Jews, the Jews being His chosen people, then who was everybody else's God, the God who had created all the other people? It was hard to understand. She felt so far from God in the temple. He seemed to be a God for men only. Why weren't girls just as important as boys? What did being Jewish mean to a girl? The women did nothing but weep and beat their hands over their chests. It was the men who were rabbis and cantors, men who blew the ram's horn and carried the Torah, men who had special seats of honor on the platform, men who wore shawls and took part in certain ceremonious rites, always men. Beatrice frowned. Going to Hebrew School. What good was it to Addie? Did she know what she was saying, did she understand what it was all about? Beatrice looked at her, watched her mumbling uncertainly, indistinctly. Addie gave her a sharp glance, full of

conceit and scorn. It didn't fool Beatrice. Addie was just doing what everybody else was doing, for no other reason. Supposing it was like that with all the others, everybody imitating everybody else, without understanding what it was all about, any of it? Papa had said that about voting. What did women know about politics, he had said. Mama voted as papa told her to. So maybe it was like that here... Hebrew... God... getting up and sitting down... She grew tired, her head ached from the stuffy air.

It was nice at the end. Everybody shook hands and said happy holiday. The congregation broke up into groups and drifted out to the street. Sunlight flooded the open doors. Everybody took a deep breath, glad to get some fresh air. The men unwound their shawls and folded them over their prayer books. Beatrice stood quietly on the sidewalk watching the movement of shadows formed and changed by the arrangement of figures. She heard papa calling goodbye and someone saying they would meet again in the afternoon. Beatrice stared ahead... would she have to come back for more?

Flowers, papa hadn't forgotten. Mama kissed him and said they were beautiful. She set them in the middle of the table so that everybody could enjoy seeing them during the meal. Pasoch, it was here again: the pots and pans and silver scoured in boiling water with red rocks, the year-round dishes put away and the Easter set brought out, the foods changed in keeping with the holiday... No bread, butter, candy, red meat. All sacrificed in memory of the passover when the Jews were led from Egypt by Moses, God making a dry pass over the sea to help them escape from slavery to freedom. Matzoh, the unleavened bread, broken and served to each. Boiled potatoes and eggs mashed in cold salt water. Chicken. Dry prunes and figs. Wine. Cold lamb. They ate hungrily. Papa and mama sang songs of gratitude. Soon the children joined in: about the tree and the dog and

the stick and the fire and the water. Like the Farmer in the Dell, the whole cycle repeated till the mouse takes the cheese and everybody runs away. If only the Zedor didn't last so long. Page after page till papa finished the whole book. Ben asking the four questions. The door opened for the angel. Hiding the matzoh. And then after they ate, visitors.

Papa said it was a waste of money and mama said, I told you so, a child, what do you expect, ten dollars for a seat. Because Beatrice couldn't sit so long in the synagogue. She got pale, said she felt sick, and looked as though she were going to faint. Mama had to take her out and walk her up and down the street to bring the color back to her face. And finally, she was allowed to go in and out as she had always done, except that she could sit down in her own seat instead of squeezing in with Addie or half-sitting on mama's lap. Mama said it was a pity with so many poor people unable to afford it who wanted to come. And then Beatrice saw how ugly it was and unjust that people should have to pay money to pray in the synagogue; it wasn't true religion to let the richest people have the best seats when maybe some poor person's heart was crying to God at home. It worried her terribly that papa had bought her a seat, she who didn't understand a thing that was going on. She vowed that it would not happen again, that next time she would ask papa to make a present of her seat to some poor religious man who wanted to be there but couldn't afford it. Nor did she feel better when she heard what sounded like an auction, with different people standing up and promising in public to donate specific sums of money to the synagogue. Papa listened a while and then he stood up and said, Five Hundred Dollars from Max Berger and family. Heads turned, a murmur rippled across the silence. Mama's face got red, her lips came together painfully, she couldn't even bring

herself to look at papa, she just sat there trembling. Then papa leaned across Beatrice and said, we should worry, the boss gave me twice that much as an Easter present and after all it's for a good cause, and he put his hand to his lips and shook his head. And though mama didn't reply, Beatrice could see she was just waiting to get outside where she could talk. A present from Mr. Schumann, all right, but why five hundred dollars when nobody else had pledged more than a fraction of that sum? After all, they weren't the most religious people there. Nor the richest. Look at the Hills who owned a small grocery store - if they didn't have a fortune, maybe a hundred thousand dollars in the bank! Mama glanced at them. And what about some of the others? Mr. Hartman who was in the wholesale furniture business, the landlord Mr. Sampson, the Hirsch family who were left a big insurance policy when Mr. Hirsch died - ten dollars, twenty-five dollars! And of all of them, Max Berger, five hundred dollars! Crazy, showing off again! But it was done now. Mama closed her eyes and asked God's forgiveness; maybe papa was right to divide his present and keep only half. Maybe they would be luckier than the others who kept everything for themselves, who made believe they were poor and lived like misers. Mama hoped so, praying deep within her for a sign that God would bless them.

For Beatrice it was the same worry all over again. Easter, Lent, Pasock - why wasn't everybody alike, have the same holidays, the same services, the same God, eat the same, speak the same, think and do and be the same? Being different was so much trouble - Jews and Christians, Catholics and Protestants, Chink and Mick, Wop and Sheeny, Guinea and Kike. Beatrice sighed; maybe it was like being a girl instead of a boy and you couldn't help it because that's how you were born and what could you do about it?

That Spring was disappointing. It wasn't the same as other Springs. Now there was piano practice every day and it always seemed to rain right after school hours. There was no May Party either. The idea started too late, there were quarrels over who should be May Queen, and everything went wrong. Francine Goodman was sixteen years old and busy keeping company with a steady boy friend; she said she was too old to think of May Parties any more, soon she would be engaged and get married. And suddenly it seemed as though all the boys and girls on Carlton Avenue had grown up and become very serious towards each other now that they were in high school. There wasn't the same boy and girl fun on the streets, not the same children playing games there. Instead, socinbles came into vogue. The invitations were secret, the party carefully shielded by drawn window shades. A piano tinkled, couples danced, a dim light burned. Silence and laughter alternated as games took their course, Spin the Bottle, Postman, Forfeits, Fortune Telling.

Something crept into the atmosphere of that spring to make it different from any spring before. School had nothing to do with it, the weather had nothing to do with it, mama and papa had nothing to do with it. The something wasn't one thing especially, it was many things all together. A note found on a path in the park full of mysterious phrases and signs, and then seeing a young boy tall in knickers and sweater watching you as he walked slowly past, scuffing his heels and kicking pebbles before him. Or sitting in the movie one Saturday afternoon and growing aware of an arm slipped across the back of your seat, a young man leaning closer until you could feel his breath. From the boy in the park she had fled, pretending she had neither picked up the note nor read it. But there was no running from the dark and heavy form beside her in the movie.

She slid to the far side of her seat, then sat up and clapped her hands and stamped when everyone else did. When she sat back again the arm adjusted itself cautiously and a thigh pressed against her. She turned angrily and hissed, how many seats did you buy with your ticket, one or two? There was a feeble apology, a quiet shift in position. But soon he was back. Listen, she said in a voice threatening to rise, if you don't leave me alone, I'm going to holler at you pretty loud and you won't like it either. He slouched into his own seat, muttered, and a minute later got up and left.

The new game Ben had begun to play with her, Ride a horse to London town, that was part of it, too. It was fun at first, sitting on his feet, holding his hands, while he seesawed back and forth; it really was like riding a horse. Ben sat on the edge of the bed, lowered and lifted her smoothly while she chanted, laughed, yelled giddap. Even mama smiled when she saw them playing so nicely together. Then Ben waited till they were alone before taking his turn and of course she couldn't hold him on her shoes - And she wouldn't have minded playing anything in the world with Ben who was her darling brother and whom she loved with all her heart, because she knew Ben would never do anything wrong with her, he was so nice and good about everything where she was concerned, he wouldn't even let his best friends swear or use bad boy language in front of her, saying, cut it out she's my sister. But maybe even Ben didn't know it was different from other games they had played, and after a few rides in his bed when they were supposed to go to sleep, she did mind and began to worry that it wasn't as nice as Ben thought it was. She didn't like the way they seemed to hide, the way Ben whispered, the way Addie called out, hey you two, I'm going to tell mama, the way Ben hurried and got all perspired and lost his breath, the way Addie looked at them

next day as though they had done something wrong - she didn't like that game at all, though she hated to tell Ben so and maybe hurt his feelings by letting him think she was like Addie, mean and selfish and crabby, and that she really thought he was playing a bad game with her.

Then there was the scene across the way, in one of the rooms opposite their bedroom window, where a man and a woman had just moved in as boarders. It was a very plain room, very white looking at night, and it showed very clearly through the darkness of the alley. The bed was white, the walls were white, the table and chair and dresser were white, and the unshaded light bulb that hung down from a white cord from the white ceiling was white, too. It was Addie who discovered the scene. It was a hot night and she couldn't sleep, so she went to the window and leaned her elbows on the sill, kneeling on the floor to feel the air against her. And suddenly, the light in the room across the way went on and a man and a woman came in and shut their door. Then they began to get undressed. Addie almost died laughing, crouched under the window. Then Ben and Beatrice looked. The man and woman seemed to be talking, unhurried and unaware; their figures outlined behind the blank, open window. I bet they just got married, Addie whispered. Beatrice was glad it was dark, they could watch without being watched. Gee, they're going to sleep naked, said Ben. There was a washstand in one corner of the room near the window; the woman came over, looked out, saw nothing to bother her, and proceeded to wash herself. The man sat on the bed, watching her brush her teeth, comb out her long hair, dry her face and hands. When she finished, she handed the towel to him; it got between their embrace. She laughed and uttered a light scream. The man reached up and pulled the light cord; the scene vanished. Nothing more was seen that night, but the

room across the way became a nightly peep show, until a windowshade was installed. After that, the scene across the way was one of shadows which the children had to interpret for themselves.

It gave Addie an idea for a new game, too. She called it Let's Make Believe and Beatrice thought it silly because Addie began to kiss her and cuddle her, telling her to be the woman while she was the man. And once Addie said aw, you're no good, you don't know how to play, and Beatrice said, does Pearlie, and Addie said, does she, oh boy, and so Beatrice tried hard to please Addie but she didn't get any fun out of it herself.

And then, suddenly, Ben told mama he didn't want to sleep in a room with girls and mama got worried and talked to papa, so he brought the folding cot out of the cellar and Ben began to sleep in the dining-room. Now Addie slept in one bed and Beatrice in the other and she was glad that she didn't have to play any more queer games.

But whatever it was that made that spring so different from any spring before, whether it was Pearlie's coming to sleep with Addie about once a week, or the change that had come over the boys and girls since their sociables began, or the spread of new games, or what, something crept into the spring and stayed, and nothing seemed the same anymore. A suspicious look came over familiar faces. Eyes looked frightened, curious, uncertain. The laughter during slave-auctions had a nervous edge. The movement of arms and bodies grew bold. Stiff Edna started to gesture like Theda Bara, stupid Birdie began to speak coquettishly, shy and careful Elsie became brazen. Beatrice frowned, emphasizing the dark shadows around her eyes. In school, she caught herself looking at Dick and Lester more and more, and it came as a shock to see Eva and Hattie looking at them, too. She wondered what kind of games they played with their friends, wondered if the children who lived near the school were like the children on her

block at home. She didn't think so. When she and Eva and Hattie were together during recess or lunch or took a walk in the park after school, they just talked about school and Mrs. Lane and tests and the next program for the assembly. They never talked about movies or what they did at home or anything like that. In a way, Beatrice was jealous of Eva and Hattie; they lived in the same house and saw each other all the time. Beatrice wished she had a friend in school who lived near her.

Then she met Goldie, a blonde frizzle-haired girl, and they began to meet in the mornings and afternoons so that they could walk back and forth from school together. Goldie lived at the bottom of the hill near the elevated crossing and though she had her own friends, she often came to visit Beatrice at the top of the hill. It didn't take long before Beatrice realized that Goldie knew about the new games and that she liked to play them, too. She wasn't like Edna or Birdie or Elsie at all; she didn't have to make believe it was fun. She seemed to know all about kissing and squeezing and rubbing her legs. She was two years older than Beatrice and though she wasn't taller, she had full breasts and stout hips. But Goldie was only in the 4th grade, and on trial there, because she had just moved from Pennsylvania and classes were different from New York. And by the end of a month, Goldie had slipped down to 3B and Beatrice was glad she had never gone to school in Pennsylvania because Goldie was the dumbest one in class. But Goldie was far from dumb outside of school and soon Beatrice knew games that she could teach to her friends. The only trouble was that she didn't seem to get the same fun out of them that Goldie did. But she did succeed in getting mama to buy her a brassiere. It was the day a street peddler came by, wheeling his pushcart of ladies' merchandise. It took a lot of arguing to convince mama she needed one, till finally mama said it was worth twenty-five cents to shut her up. It was a

flat brassiere with wide straps and Beatrice was glad to be able to hide the two points she insisted stuck way out of her dress. Addie said she was crazy but a few days later Beatrice noticed there were two brassieres in the drawer where they kept their underthings. And soon Birdie and Florence got Mrs. Singer to buy them brassieres, too. And all because Goldie had started it. It made Beatrice mad. She was smaller than anyone. Mama laughed, you silly child, you aren't even nine yet. As though being told that helped!

Only Teddy could appreciate how she felt. Only she could appreciate how Teddy felt. It made her want to cry everytime she looked at him. Could that be Teddy? His shaved nose and mouth sticking out like a pig snout, his legs bare except for a fur cuff, his whole body naked to the shoulder ruff, his tail shaved skinny to a fluffy end piece that looked like a duster - it simply couldn't be! Why had papa done such an awful thing to Teddy, making him look like a silly imitation lion, a white toy one? Mama was disgusted, Ben sulked, Addie wailed and Beatrice wept. Teddy kept rolling on the floor miserably. The tail-end duster made him shiver and whimper whenever it touched his back. Oh, it was cruel, sobbed Beatrice, all his beautiful silky fur gone. No wonder he wanted to hide, going around naked, as though his clothes had been taken away. Didn't she know? It was like the difference between having a brassiere and not having one. Oh Teddy, I'm so sorry,she cried and the dog whimpered pityingly in her lap, trying to hide his face under her arm.

Papa said they were all dumb, that the haircut was good for Teddy, just what he needed for the warm weather. Think I'd waste five dollars for nothing, he said. How would you like to wear a fur coat all summer? Wait till it grows out again, you'll see who was right, you or me. And a few days later, papa himself came home with a haircut, bald from ear to ear.

My God, Max, mama exclaimed as soon as she could recover, you didn't have much hair before, but now! You look like, I don't know what, a convict in jail! Did you ever, a man making himself look like a balloon? People will die laughing when they see you!

Papa was not at all disturbed. A lot you know. I wish I had the money some of those big shots have whoshave their hair off every summer. It's healthy, comfortable. A convict in jail, huh! Men used to wear long beards, too, don't forget. And he went to the dresser to pat some Pinaud lotion over his face and head. He seemed quite satisfied with what he saw in the mirror.

They went back to Woodridge that summer. Farmer Sam was still there and the porch and the orchard and the river, but everything seemed changed somehow: the house seemed bigger, painted white and green; there were more trees and flowers, more houses on the road, more children and automobiles, more everything. Mama's friend, Mrs. Red Berger, was there again and so was Daisy, tall now and slim, her limp not so noticeable. Beatrice thought she looked like a young lady, but after a few days, they were the same old friends, going everywhere together, sewing doilies together, playing games together, and doing everything together except eating and sleeping, because Daisy ate at a table with her mother and aunt, and slept in a room in the annex. And at last Beatrice learned what Addie and Pearlie and the big girls whispered about, and she was satisfied. Because Daisy told her about the monthly sickness of girls, about how babies were born, about many things, and she was so disgusted with mama and papa that she could hardly bear it when papa came out for weekends and slept with mama in the next room. She decided she would never get married, never have babies! But it was fun playing with the boys and running and screaming all over the place. It was only

when she was alone with Daisy that boys disgusted her. And suddenly all the old jokes took on a new meaning and she was as surprised as though she had never heard them before. She looked with strange eyes at Addie, wondering how Addie felt about the monthly, when she had it, what it was like.

She knew, one day. Addie got sick during a meal, and had to leave the table. Mama went with her. Then Addie stayed in bed two days with a hot water bottle on her stomach. She cried and hurt a lot and was always running to the bathroom. Beatrice didn't say anything but she noticed Addie hiding wads of cotton under her pillow.

It was Daisy who explained everything. Even boys, Daisy said. Beatrice thought of Ben and her heart grew cold with terror. Like dogs, Daisy said. Beatrice stared at Teddy and a terrier leaping in the middle of the road. Daisy's laughter broke, her eyes darting from the dogs to Beatrice and back. Beatrice looked at her companion uncertainly, then turned and ran towards the woods. Mama and papa like dogs, a fine joke! All those things Daisy had told her, maybe they were all lies and dirty jokes! When she had finished crying, finished hating everyone and everything, she wandered about among the trees, letting their green peace calm her, clean her, make her whole again.

It was a lovely world. She came back to it with a sense of fresh discovery. Grass stems were sweet in the mouth, the sky was green between blue leaves, the air was full of colors, the night was magic with stars, the wind was a dancer, the world was all mystery and most precious of all was being I, Beatrice, catching it through looking eyes, between her hands, with her lips and ears and nose and every secret fold inside her brain. Water, tickling her toes, wet gliding over her body with splash of hands and roar in ears and choke

in throat, bees humming the orchard, the swift of wings to swaying branches, the limpid call of morning light vibrating through the day to hush of dusk and whispering night, the early smell of cock-a-doodle-doo, the wet of hay stacks in the field, the rain on dust, the shave of grass over the lawn, the exhausted sigh of flowers when the sun went down, the cool smooth of thick cream blended with banana, the crisp of baked rolls, the buttery goodness flavored by hot coffee, the bite of hard juicy apples, the crunch of nutshells, the constant surprise of ice cream and fluffy malted milkshakes. Everything was as it should be and nothing had changed except time and she was still Beatrice, though a year older, a little taller, and able to remember a little more of Now, Yesterday, Long Ago, and all that had happened in this so changing, changeless time.

She had a happy summer and acquired the nickname Giggles because she was always laughing. They took pictures of each other and in groups. They went to Silver Lake for a picnic. They had a hay ride. They had a barn dance and mock marriage. They had holiday lunches on the lawn. They spent long hours in their bathing suits at the river. They went swinging in the orchard and lying in the hammocks. And by the end of summer, Beatrice was ready to take whatever her ninth year was preparing to bring.

4A wiped Daisy, the summer, the farm and everything else from her mind. She had Mrs. De Vries for her teacher and began to worship her from the very first day. How beautifully she wrote on the board, how wonderfully she taught, how marvellously she did everything. Ola De Vries. She was Dutch, she said, married to a Frenchman. She wore her fine chestnut hair in a braid encircling her head. Her face was small, her eyes bright blue, her body flat and broad. She started work immediately, every lesson in the day something new, something out of their 4A books. Grammar, spelling, arithmetic, geography, history, composition,

reading, two-minute exercise drills - everything went like clock work and Beatrice felt she was really starting school at last. She was in 4A1 and had the best teacher in the world. The first teacher as smart as papa, as strict, as perfect loving as - ah, there were no words for her! How hard she would work! She loved school, loved Cla De Vries, loved 4A1, loved everything.

She was ready. School became a business, with every hour in the day accounted for. The world ruled by Mrs. De Vries put everything in its place. There was no longer any question about what to do, what for, how or for whom. Schedule was definite, rules precise. From class line-up in the yard in the morning to class dismissal in the afternoon, everything followed a given plan, Mrs. De Vries made it clear she was recorder, witness, guide, teacher and friend but that each pupil's effort, conduct and work were his own affair, each would have to take the consequence of his own mental, moral and physical makeup; the world was there, organized and ready in the classroom, with its link to office and y ard and street and home; each had merely to follow the given blueprint, to fulfill his duties, to do his best according to his role and abilities, and the world would be clear, smooth, shining.

Cleanliness is next to Godliness.

If you fail the first time, try and try again

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure

Don't cross your bridges till you come to them

Think before you leap

Each day began with a wise quotation.

Inspection followed, Mrs. De Vries standing at the window and examining one row at a time for clean, brushed heads, clean faces and teeth, clean cut nails, clean pressed clothes, clean shined shoes...tie and belt in place,

stockings pulled tight, a handkerchief ready, underwear and bodies free of dirt. The health captain kept a daily record of each, indicating checks and crosses.

Next, row monitors checked homework, reported erasings and blots, examined text books for torn pages and scribble marks, and hurried to have the best row ready first.

The arithmetic lesson followed, with flashcard drills, tables, measures, oral problems. Then homework examples were checked at the board, the pupils with perfect answers helping those who had missed. Then Mrs. De Vries taught a new lesson and gave the class some new examples to work out. They were allowed to use scratch paper and pencil, then transferred the examples to good paper with pen and ink. Good paper had to be carefully folded into box squares with a double heading indicating name, grade, school and date. Then the board with written problems was uncovered and Mrs. De Vries held an autopsy of each. The problem was read silently and aloud. Given. To find. How. Approximate answer. Discussions back and forth telling why, using common sense. And then the problems worked out on paper, with those who finished first sent to the boards to copy theirs. Everyone knowing that five such problems would be chosen for the Friday test. No erasings permitted, no blots, no crossings out. Think before you leap. Remember names, dollar signs, decimal points, label the answer, check backwards, add the subtracted amount, be sure.

The spelling lesson came next. Mrs. De Vries made them separate the new words into syllables, mark the sounds diacritically and place the accents, give the meanings and use the words in sentences. They wrote the words in the air, spelled them aloud, copied them into their books, played a word game. They had to learn prefix, suffix, root, when to double the final letter, when to drop the e, when y was changed to i, how plurals were formed. Penmanship grew out of the spelling lesson, capitals almost touching the top line, small letters one third

of the space, loop letters half a space above or below the line, the whole word sitting on the line and slanted evenly in the same direction. Writing was an art, it had to be beautiful.

Compositions meant interesting sentences about sensible topics, using some of the new spelling words for special credit. The class practiced orally and Mrs. De Vries wrote the best sentences on the board. There she reviewed the writing rules: margins, title in capitals, skipping a space, indenting for paragraph, the first word capitalized, the use of punctuation marks. Then they wrote the day's composition on yellow lined paper. On Friday, they would be given white lined paper.

Grammar meant parsing and diagramming, showing the construction of subject, verb, predicate, adjectives, adverbs, clauses, prepositional phrases, and possessive pronouns. Language consisted of 26 letters formed into words and sentences, declarative, interrogative, imperative, with active and passive verbs, with complements and objects, with conjunctions and participles.

And between lessons were two-minute exercise drills. Windows were opened, lungs stretched, arms and legs relaxed, knees bent, backs straightened, heads cleared, throats and lips flexed by phonetic drills, games played for alertness. Geography and history were logical studies of time, place, event, use. They made classified lists: Resources - Industries - Products. Date - Explorer - Discovery. Surface - Climate - Growth. Event - Leader - Result. They drew maps, enacted historical scenes, traveled through foreign lands.

Three times a week, there was a change of class rooms. There was workshop with Mr. Manley, sewing with Mrs. Florence, and music with Miss Hunter. They moved at given bell-signals, making the room changes quietly and on line through the corridors. On Wednesday, they went to assembly the first hour of the morning.

They enjoyed the changes, enjoyed coming back to their classroom.

Mr. Lansing was very proud of P. S. 40; he reminded the assembly of their fine record among the city's schools. They had the highest arithmetic and spelling scores, the best attendance, the fewest transfers. They were the only school that required a Palmer Certificate in Handwriting for graduation. And, he added, with a sly wink, the parents and teachers in his district were the finest in the city. The children looked shy and smiled. Then Mr. Lansing urged them to remember the priceless heritage of being Americans, of living and learning in a democracy.

Your parents and ancestors came here from all parts of the world, from Italy, Roumania, Russia, Poland, England, Ireland, Scotland, Holland, Germany, China, Turkey, Spain, Africa, from many, many different countries. They found jobs, free schools, churches - just as our songs say, the land of the free, sweet land of liberty. Our laws promised us those things, and you children as future American citizens have the sacred duty to preserve and obey those laws. It does not matter what color you are, what race you are, what religion you believe in. You are Americans, that is your nationality. We have children from good Jewish families, Scotch Presbyterian families, Russian Orthodox families, Italian Catholic families, all kinds. But/America you are all the same, all Americans, remember that, when you play, when you make friends, when you come to school, and someday, when you work together. You have the privileges of America and you must be worth of them. It will not be easy. You must work hard, just as you do in your classrooms in order for P. S. 40 to keep its high standard. If a thing is worth having, it is worth working for, right?

to

Came the chorus, RIGHT!

It was 4A1 that broke the school record. Never in the history of P. S. 40

had anyone been skipped. And now, a whole class! Mrs. De Vries calmly announced it one morning, 4A1 had finished its 4A work and Mr. Lansing had given them permission to start 4B work. The children sat stiffly, unable to realize the impact of the news. Eyes blinked and stared out of frozen faces. Then Mrs. De Vries threw back her head and laughed, her arms crossed tightly in front of her. And still the room sat silent, wrapped in its embarrassment. A few children slouched low in their seats, some covered their heads on the desks. What's the matter, aren't you happy about it, Mrs. De Vries asked. The delicate veins in her eyelids grew red as she looked around. Such a thing had never happened before; it was hard to understand and believe. Mrs. De Vries leaned down and lifted Beatrice's chin. Do you think you can do it? Two dark brown eyes drank in the blue. You're so wonderful, Beatrice whispered, oh Mrs. De Vries - Her face was pulled against the rough folds of a woolen skirt and soon the whole class was laughing, welcoming relief from tension. Eva and Hattie hugged each other across the aisle. Dick and Lester shook hands. Congratulations and self-pride swept the room. Boy, it takes us! You mean it takes our teacher! Are we really going to write 4B on our papers now, without even having a promotion? Mrs. De Vries walked to the back of the room and erased the A next to the 4 on the attendance board, then turned to see if all eyes were on her and carefully inserted the B. The cheers died down as she placed a finger to her lips and nodded toward the door. Voices grew hushed. Will we change our books too? Mrs. De Vries went directly to the book closet. Immediately, desk boxes were emptied, the 4A book wrappers removed or torn off and the row monitors got busy collecting and carrying the books back and forth.

In a few minutes 4B work began.

By the time the children had returned from lunch, their new status had

asserted itself. Could they have new seats? Would Mrs. De Vries appoint new monitors? What were they to do with all their 4A homework lesson books? Could they buy new ones? Were they going to take home their old report cards, get new ones?

Mrs. De Vries cut through the excited babble kindly but firmly. The double grade was an experiment, they were on trial, there was no time for silly trivia. Seats, monitors, notebooks, report cards were not important. If we're going to do a whole term's work in the ten weeks left, we're going to need every minute for work, with none to spare. So let's get busy!

They did and Beatrice was glad she was still row monitor, class secretary and yard leader. The 4B1 line was the best in the yard, heads front, posture straight, and no chewing, whispering or moving of any kind. Occasionally, a child complained to Mrs. De Vries that Beatrice was too strict - she won't even let me blow my nose or sneeze! Mrs. De Vries smiled. That's why our class gets all the stars, she said.

Being class secretary was an even bigger responsibility. It meant having to make out weekly test reports for theoffice, to write alphabetical lists of the names of the boys and girls for Mr. Manley, Mrs. Florence and Miss Hunter once a month, to keep a record of the wordsmost frequently mispelled, to copy class letters and compositions meant for the superintendent, to take the attendance, to write the homework assignment on the board, to copy the arithmetic problems on a sheet of paper.

If I'm ever late on the ferry from New Jersey because of the ice on the river, or if I'm ever absent, I want Beatrice to take charge until I arrive or a substitute teacher is sent to this room by the office. In either case, you will continue school business as usual, exactly as though I were here.

Beatrice repeated the words to everyone at home. It made Ben's 7B work and Addie's third term in high school seem child's play. Being Mrs. De Vries' class monitor, secretary and yard leader was more like papa's work as manager of a wholesale bakery company. Everything became secondary to her school responsibilities. She was too busy to play with her friends, too busy to help mama, too busy to study Hebrew and practice piano lessons. What if Mrs. De Vries really did come late or get sick? She had to know more than the children if she was going to teach them! Otherwise how would she get them to listen and do as she told them?

She finished the 4B books and began studying Ben's 7B books. He laughed and said she was crazy but showed her how to do fractions, decimals and percents. In spelling, Ben let her take a test on his words. For reading, she used his seventh year reader, geography and history books. In a way, she wished Mrs. De Vries would get sick, wished the river would freeze over so that the ferry would be stuck all day long. She sighed under the load of her ambition, wishing. It wasn't enough to get 100% in arithmetic, spelling, dictation and grammar, geography and history, an A in penmanship and composition and reading. So did Eva and Hattie and Lester and Dick. There was no satisfaction, no triumph that way. Not even when Mrs. De Vries put an A+ on her report card. Because the others got A+ too. Her five super pupils, she called them.

To overcome the problem of no competition, the five called a meeting and agreed to become specialized experts, agreeing to let each dominate over one particular field. Lester was given history, Eva was given geography, Dick was given current events, Hattie was given composition and Beatrice was given arithmetic.

In the Berger household, arithmetic problems became the order of the day. At every meal, papa had a new problem. While she ate, Beatrice tasted, chewed, swallowed and digested numbers. Sometimes, mama, Addie and Ben joined in, livening

the game with their jokes and guesses. But mostly it was just between the two of them, papa and Beatrice, having fun thinking seriously, accurately.

But more than her pleasure in being the arithmetic expert of 4B1 was the feeling Beatrice had for Mrs. De Vries. It was impossible to think of her teacher being like other women, one who had been born in Holland and been a little girl and then grown up and fallen in love with a Frenchman named Andre and gotten married and taken a home in a New Jersey suburb. Everything about Mrs. De Vries was wrapped in a glowing aura. When she crossed her legs, perching on some pupil's desk, the glimpse of colored flannel drawers that ended in a gartered ruffle at the knees made Beatrice lower her eyes and glance away as though she had seen a sacred thing not meant for seeing. And when Mrs. De Vries entered the teacher's room off the yard for the recess hour at noon, Beatrice could not imagine the lunch scene since teachers probably did not eat in any way known to ordinary people and children. She watched the eighth grade girls in white caps and aprons going in and out the door, carrying trays, steaming pots, plates and cups, wondering what they saw in that closed room, what they carried on their trays, how they could laugh and move so lightly back and forth. What greater privilege could any pupil have than to see teachers eat, to hear them speak outside their classrooms, to know how they sat and moved and walked among themselves - it strained her imagination to the utmost and she stopped as though before the threshold of heaven.

Then one day Mrs. De Vries said she had brought some lunch from home and would be in Miss Hunter's room for the noon hour from now on and asked if someone could bring her some hot soup from the little cafe on River Avenue. All hands went up, but Mrs. De Vries picked Miguel, the new foreign boy, because he lived

on River Avenue and knew the cafe and was the biggest and oldest in the class and would not suffer for missing a few minutes of his lunchtime by running the errand for her. So Beatrice determined to find the cafe and after school hurried to River Avenue and walked three long blocks towards the railway station till she found it. She volunteered to go for the soup, first thing next morning.

Mrs. De Vries smiled. Errands like that are for big strong boys, not little ladies like you, she said. Beatrice stammered, her face ardent with the eloquence missing from her tongue. Mrs. De Vries hugged her. Some other time, dear, you have enough to do as it is.

Beatrice took her seat. I'm forever blowing bubbles, pretty bubbles in the air; they fly so high, nearly reach the sky, then like my dreams they fade and die... the words and the tune continued all morning. Maybe Miguel would be absent tomorrow. Maybe she could forget something and go to Miss Hunter's room and. She gnawed on her pencil, covering it with tiny wedges; the wood was soft, she chewed it down to the core. She looked at it in disgust. Goat! Some children ate chalk, crayon, paper, even ink. Her feet scraped the floor as she walked up the aisle. Any pointed at her meaningfully. Beatrice flushed. Mrs. De Vries meant that feet-scrapers were dumbbells. Dumkopfs, Mrs. De Vries called them, if you raise your feet, it shows you have brains in your head! During the two-minute rest period, Beatrice examined the bulletin wall. Mrs. De Vries had put up some new pictures. One showed a friendly looking man, smiling, sleepy, his tie and shirt awry, staggering down a crooked path, holding a bottle in his hand. Underneath, in slanty letters, was the caption: there's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip. She wondered what it meant. The man looked drunk and yet there was something funny about him. She thought of papa coming home late. Surely Mrs. De Vries must have had some other reason for putting up the picture. She kept repeating the words underneath it, trying to find out.

When the Christmas holidays neared, Beatrice began to feel uneasy. There ought to be something special about it this year. No one seemed to have any bright ideas. As usual, the class was drawing cards, cutting out black board and window decorations, reading The Night before Christmas, telling Christmas stories. Mrs. De Vries told them about St. Nicholas and how the children in Holland put their wooden shoes before the fireplace, then she described a French Christmas with Noel, to remind them that Christmas was a happy holiday for children everywhere. Then she read a chapter a day from a book called Dicken's Christmas Carol. But the uneasy feeling in Beatrice remained. She felt the class ought to do something special for Mrs. De Vries, maybe a surprise. The idea tumbled from her head, trying to take shape.

Mama was crotcheting a bed cap and jacket for Mrs. De Vries, it was blue trimmed with white. Beatrice couldn't make up her mind about it. Maybe it was the wrong kind of thing to give a teacher. She spoke to papa about it.

Why, it's just the thing, Mrs. De Vries will appreciate it all the more because it's made by hand, it will show her how much the family thinks of her. Not everybody can make one. It takes talent, patience, fine taste and artistic workmanship. Remember, European women are famous for their handwork.

Beatrice was unimpressed. But do you think it's all right to give Mrs. De Vries something so, well you know, to wear in bed?

Naturally, papa said, it's meant for a lady! It's for Saturdays and Sundays, when she stays in bed to relax, to read the paper, to look pretty!

Beatrice's heart rose. Of course. She could just see Mrs. De Vries with her braids hanging down, on a beautiful bed in a large room, the maid coming in with a breakfast tray. Papa was so smart, he always knew about such things. he must be right. So her present was folded in tissue and laid in a silky

looking box, ready for its Christmas wrap and ribbon tie, with a pretty card to carry the Berger greetings. And yet, all the teachers would get gifts. Mrs. De Vries was different; it was her class that had been skipped for the first time in P. S. 40, she deserved something special!

Finally, the idea took shape. It was during a composition lesson. She finished hers quickly and raised her hand. Mrs. De Vries looked up from her desk. Yes, Beatrice, what is it?

Well, began Beatrice, I - I'd like to talk to the children about something - she stopped in confusion, feeling their eyes on her. But I can't tell them if you're here, she ended lamely.

Mrs. De Vries leaned back in her chair, pretending indignation. So you want me to leave the room, is that it? Then she clapped the desk and went into a gale of laughter. All right, Miss Berger, you be the teacher for a while. Well, what do you think of - honestly, if that isn't the funniest - And she walked out of the room still laughing.

As soon as the door was closed the children rushed forward, everyone trying to squeeze into the few seats nearest Beatrice. She motioned them wildly to listen and then whispered excitedly, look, we've got to do something to surprise Mrs. De Vries next week, the last day before Christmas... Now this is my idea...

Ten minutes later there was a knock at the door and Mrs. De Vries returned, holding Mrs. Florence by the hand. Everyone was studiously looking at a geography book. Well, may I come back now, asked Mrs. De Vries.

We're ready, said Beatrice shyly.

Is it a very big secret, Mrs. Florence asked the class in a hushed voice. Beatrice frowned and every eye fell back on the open geography book. Smiles vanished. Oh, excuse me! Mrs. Florence placed her long fingered hand against

her mouth and leaned down to whisper in Mrs. De Vries' ear. Mrs. De Vries nodded. They remained at the door, whispering, until the bell rang.

Thank you, Mrs. De Vries, Beatrice said as she went out, I didn't mean to be impolite but it was so important.

Mrs. De Vries chucked her under the chin gaily. It's all right, I was a little girl myself, once upon a time. Beatrice slipped into line and drew a long breath; a load had been taken off her chest.

Secret conferences took place for a week. Finally it was agreed to let Mrs. Florence in on the secret because without her help the surprise wouldn't come off right. They formed a small committee and went to see her one at a time. By the time the third pupil asked permission to leave the room, Mrs. De Vries realized something was up.

My goodness, she said, there seem to be a lot of weak kidneys this afternoon. Beatrice avoided her eyes.

On Friday, Mrs. Florence came in soon after the one o'clock bell sounded. Mrs. De Vries, will you please rehearse my class play, I'm just worn out. I'll stay here, if you don't mind, it won't take but an hour, she apologized sweetly. Well, I don't know, said Mrs. De Vries, after all this is our last day together till next year, I'm not sure the children would like me to leave them. No one moved or spoke. But I can't refuse a good friend like Mrs. Florence, can I? Well, I'll hurry as fast as I can. Are your kiddies in the room?

Oh no, gasped Mrs. Florence, clutching her keys, they're waiting for you in the assembly! Mrs. De Vries took a moment to straighten her desk and at parting said the class could sing if they liked. Mrs. Florence waited till she had gone, then opened the door and signalled, her finger on her lips. The children filed on tiptoe to her room and back, bringing packages and bundles and packages.

Mrs. De Vries' desk was cleared and covered with a sheet of Christmas-paper, then the holiday gifts piled on it. A long workshop table was moved in and speedily decorated. Bundle after bundle was opened: fruits, cakes, cookies, pies, peppermint sticks, hard candies, shelled nuts, raisins, chocolate Santa Clauses -all the foods were lined up alongside paper plates and napkins. In the middle was set a beautiful bouquet of flowers arranged in a vase by Mrs. Florence. Then every blackboard was washed. The three best drawing students were given pieces of colored chalk; each knew what to do. Swiftly, Mrs. Florence filled the front boards with her own chalk work: Santa Claus coming down from the sky in a sled drawn by reindeers, Santa swinging one leg down a chimney, his back laden with a sack of toys, Santa beaming at the row of socks lining the fireplace. And now the room was ready; red bells and green wreaths hanging everywhere, red and green streamers looped from window to window, the desk piled with gifts, the long table against the window heaped with refreshments.

At two o'clock they heard Mrs. Florence's class coming down the corridor and then Mrs. De Vries appeared. SURPRISE! sang AB1 lustily . She came in slowly and looked around with brimming eyes. Feet stamped, hands clapped, hurrahs echoed. Mrs. Florence closed the door shoftly, waving her curious youngsters away.

Oh children, you shouldn't - Mrs. De Vries' voice broke. She turned towards her desk, took out a small handkerchief and blew her nose. When her eyes cleared and she saw the gifts stacked on the desk, she had another cry. I haven't any more handkerchiefs, she sniffed, trying to smile. Miguel, always the gentleman, came forward to offer his which was neatly ironed and unused. She took it with a brave show of gratitude and pressed it against her eyes. Thank you, children, I'm really/quite overcome by this beautiful surprise. I don't know how you managed it but I think I can guess.

Mrs. Florence helped us! And we had a committee, added little Otto in his harsh voice, forgetting his head had recently been shaved by order of the school nurse.

I'm sure you all helped, said Mrs. De Vries, it takes everyone on a team to make a good team. Believe me, I'm very proud. I'll never forget this happy Christmas. As soon as I get home, I'm going to write it down in my little book of memories. But goodness, how am I going to carry back all these presents? I'll need a truck!

Aren't you going to open them? Please open them!

Oh children, must I? They're beautifully packed and they would look so nice under our Christmas tree at home. I can hardly wait for Andre to see what my darling children did for me. But I promise to tell you what's in every package when we come back after New Year's Day, how's that? The children nodded happily, eager for her to see the refreshment table. The flowers are lovely! She counted them: Why, there are enough to give you each one! No! No, No! We bought them for you! We all chipped in!

But children, how can I carry them home? The flowers will be crushed and frozen by the time I get to the ferry. And truthfully, I'm ashamed not to have something for each of you. Won't you let me give you one of my flowers as an expression of my thanks, at least?

Again they agreed, happy to do anything to make Mrs. De Vries happy.

Shall we fix the first plate for Mrs. Florence? She sent Miguel off with it. My, you have sweet dear mothers. I bet everyone of these is home made. Who brought that lovely chocolate cake?

Mildred, the class shouted.

And this fruit loaf?

Annabelle, they called.

And this looks like apple pie.

Peter stood up. It is, and very good too! Tongues smacked lips, hands circled over bellies, eyes rolled.

And what's this called, she asked, holding up a plate stacked with flaky rectangles.

Strudel, Beatrice announced bashfully, wondering if the children would laugh at her for bringing a Jewish pastry, but no one did.

Well, said Mrs. De Vries, there certainly is enough to go around twice. Is there anyone else you would like to remember, besides Mrs. Florence?

Mr. Lansing, someone called.

How isn't that thoughtful, exclaimed Mrs. De Vries, fixing several plates at one time, my, won't he be pleased!

Miss Dawson, too, because she's in his office and might get jealous, said Harry.

Aw her, someone said. Mrs. De Vries pretended she didn't hear.

Yeah, but then there's Mrs. Kilpatrick, the clerk, and gosh if we're gonna -

I can just hear what they're going to say about ABL, beamed Mrs. De Vries, the nicest and most unselfish children in the school because they didn't keep the party all to themselves.

Suddenly everyone was remembering another teacher and of course they couldn't leave out the janitor or Mr. Manley who took the boys for workshop or Miss Hunter who took them for singing -

I think that will do very nicely, said Mrs. De Vries, smiling, seven guests including the custodian, children, not janitor. Volunteers were dispatched, bearing ABL cheer. Then the children lined up and came forward for their plates, eyes signalling preferences, and soon the table was cleared and everybody was eating and talking and at last Beatrice discovered how Mrs. De Vries ate, with dainty fingers, small bites, and her lips together while she chewed. Most

wonderful of all, she had chosen one of mama's strudels for her own plate! Not a crumb got on her face and when she finished, she dusted her fingers lightly in the air and said it was one of the best pastries she had ever tasted.

What is it made with, Beatrice, she asked.

My mama chops the walnuts in a big copper thing with a - she stopped and motioned with her hand.

Oh yes, a mortar and pestle, I know.

Beatrice wasn't sure. And then she puts raisins and jelly and other things inside and then she rolls it up and cuts it.

No wonder it's so good, Mrs. De Vries said, tell you mother I said so, won't you? Then she praised all their mothers and thanked them for making the party such a success. While the monitors cleaned up, the children sang Christmas Carols and then Mrs. De Vries finished reading the last chapter of Dickon's Christmas Carol.

Snow came in time to make it a white Christmas week and Beatrice went belly-whopping down the hill on Ben's sled. Gone were the long flannels and woolen stockings. Under her sheared brown coat the wind whistled up her legs till her buttocks felt frozen. How lucky dogs were to have such nice warm fur coats! Teddy's had grown back beautifully, just as papa had said it would, white, silky, long. Papa kept feeding him whiskey. To keep him warm, he said, chuckling at the way Teddy licked his dish.

What next, mama said, I think you're crazy, giving a dog Hennessey no less!

Papa's eyes twinkled. Sure the best, same as his master drinks. Think I want to give him cheap poison? He's an aristocrat, a real French connoisseur, aren't you, boy? The dog blinked uncertainly and lurched sideways.

He's drunk, mama shrilled.

Happy, you mean. O. K., boy, you can lie down and sleep it off now, you won't know what hit you when you wake up.

It was a real holiday, she forgot school. Suddenly, there were friends again and cousins and all the people on the street and the world of papa's business and mama's kitchen and trains and restaurants and shops and theatres and something called wireless and newspaper scandals and - Guilty, she dashed off a New Year greeting card to Mrs. De Vries, assuring her that she thought of her every day and could hardly wait for school to begin again. She had copied the address from the teacher's register book in the office. She looked at it proudly, it was the first letter she had ever written. How wonderful to be able to send it to Mrs. De Vries! New Jersey - it took a two cent stamp. She dropped it in a mailbox on the boulevard, then ran to catch up with mama and Addie.

Cousin Jeannette and Terry came to visit. Terry was dressed in green and it showed off her white skin and blue eyes and dark hair. Like an actress, thought Beatrice, aware of Terry's perfume.

You little monkey, laughed Terry, why do you look at me that way?

Because you're so beautiful, Beatrice said. Everyone laughed.

Believe me, mama said, she knows what she 's talking about. Who has to know you were ever married or had children? You can be Miss Bromley again without fooling anybody. You're still a young girl and beautiful is right. You'll have is right. You'll have all the boys at your door in no time. Only this time, and mama wagged her finger at Terry.

Don't worry, Terry answered, I've had my lesson. I've got my divorce, a nice job, and I'm not going to be in any hurry to leave home again. If I ever marry, it's got to be worth my while, a good husband to me, a good father to my kid and a good son to my mother.

Cousin Jeannette squeezed her daughter's hand. See what a nice pal I've got, she said.

At Cousin George's house, Beatrice met her Philadelphia cousins. It was where Tanta Mutter's daughter Alice lived with her family. It was funny hearing the two boys talk, saying telephone and thee instead of you. They were eight and ten years old and she thought of little Lord Fauntleroy when she saw them. Alice's husband was a doctor, a big friendly looking man. Beatrice liked him as soon as she met him; he swung her up in the air and shook her till she laughed and begged quits.

We're Quakers, explained the older boy. You know, the City of Brotherly Love.

I wouldn't dream of living anywhere else, said Cousin Alice. The Quakers are such polite, good people. The boys don't even like New York. They went shopping and got lost in a taxi.

It's too big, Leonard said.

It's dirty, said Milton.

And Philadelphia, asked Beatrice, amused at their strange way of speaking.

Oh, Philadelphy's nice. It has low houses and wide streets and very big trees. We like it there, it's altogether different from New York.

On the way home, she and Ben had a good time imitating them. The boys shopping by themselves, riding in taxis, living in Philadelphia - it was all new to Beatrice, like the boys' speech. There was more than one way of living, of speaking. But afterwards, it wasn't the two boys she thought about. It was Gene, about whom nobody had talked, and Tanta Mutter. The big fish on the wall. Her doll. She frowned, the images suddenly telescoped as though they were receding.

Then she met another group of cousins, from Boston, and her world shifted its boundaries again. It seemed her Boston cousins were related to her Brooklyn

cousins.

Louis and Harry are brothers, mama explained, both sons of my brother Willie, may he rest in peace. Willie was the oldest. Now his children have children even bigger than you.

It was all very confusing to Beatrice. Where are they, then, she asked, I never met them before, did I?

Oh, said mama, you have lots of cousins in Europe. Not all my sisters' and brothers' children came here, only Louis, David, Harry and Eunice. God rest her soul. Beatrice went to the closet, the blue glass slipper and the Chinese cup were still there.

Cousin Harry was nicer looking than Cousin Louis, but his wife Millie wasn't nice looking at all. She had a big neck that hung down like a swollen bag and she couldn't move around very well. But they had four children and Beatrice liked Walter, who was Ben's age. He had light blue eyes and dark curly eyelashes that matched his hair. She wished he didn't live in Boston. It seemed unfair to have cousins you could never see.

Boston speech was different, too. Gertrude's sounded like a stage play, though she was only a shy girl with blonde hair and freckled face. She said mama and papa, and was always attentive when they spoke to her.

They were not like the Brooklyn cousins at all. There was something about them - She thought of Lila, of Mrs. De Vries. She wasn't quite sure how to place them.

Is Cousin Harry rich, she asked mama when the Boston visit had ended.

Oh yes, mama said, they have their own private house and Millie has a maid to do the work, poor thing.

What's the matter with her?

Better you should never know. A goiter, God forbid. She didn't have it when she got married; Millie was a pretty young girl, I remember. Some women,

I don't know, sighed mama. But did you notice how they all treat her, with such love and respect? Harry's got a good family, believe me, just like my brother Willie; quiet and hard-working, saves his money for his home and children. So now you know your Boston cousins. Maybe we'll go visit them some day, if I can get papa interested in anything else but himself.

Before the holidays were over, mama's third nephew, David came to see her. He was younger and thinner than Harry or Louis, and better-looking, except that he seemed weak and tired. He called mama Aunt Caroline and had a sad voice. Beatrice didn't stay long. For some reason she thought of Cousin Eunice lying sick in her bed, her braids hanging dangerously over the pan on the floor.

At supper she found out why he had come. Mama seemed worried. Harry and Louis want to help him but he won't give Miriam up. Even Molly, her own sister, begs him to be sensible. Miriam is a sick girl, she tells him. He knows that! A girl eighteen years old,isn't it a shame? So pretty, so sweet.

Papa shook his head, feeling sorry. What can you do, she's been coughing like that for years.

Sh, said mama, I don't want the children to know. God forgive me, I can't even let her come here. Then David comes anyway and I have to spray the whole house afterwards. The poor boy, he doesn't even seem to realize how dangerous it is, going around like that. Don't you think he kisses her? And then he kisses me. How can I refuse my own nephew?

A crazy family, papa said, every one married to everyone else' sister or brother.

What's the difference, mama answered, the're not really blood relations. Harry, Louis, David and Eunice are one family and Molly, Miriam and Paul are another family.

Yes, said papa, but Molly married Louis, Eunice married Paul and now David wants to marry Miriam, what a mix up!

Why should Miriam be so sick, said mama, look at Molly and Paul.

And Eunice, papa asked, have you forgotten? Mama bit her lips. If you ask me, the whole bunch of them are none too healthy, they're all pale and delicate, your side of the family.

Is that so, said mama angrily, in all my years and as long as I can remember, we never had such a sickness, God forbid, in any part of my family, not my mother's or my father's. Eunice, who knows, maybe it was something else!

Papa didn't want to argue; he didn't like sick-talk or sickness, anyway. Well, he said, getting up, my advice is to stop this business with Miriam right away, the sooner, the better, for David, for Miriam, for all of us, that's all.

Stop them, repeated mama, what do you think we've been trying to do all this time if not stop them? But how, that's what I'd like to know, how?

Send her away, exclaimed papa, she doesn't belong in this climate anyhow. Send her to Arizona or Denver or up to the mountains. The poor girl can't last much longer as it is. My God, such a bunch of fools!

Mama couldn't do anything but cry. Beatrice thought of the sweetheart mama had had before she married papa. Consumption, isn't that what he had died from? Poor Miriam, poor David. Maybe mama had loved her sweetheart just as David loved Miriam. Why did love have to be spoiled by sickness? Maybe mama would have been happy if she had married her sweetheart. Did he have to die? Would Miriam die, too? She slipped down in front of mama's chair and put her head in mama's lap. Poor mama, poor David. Life was so strange.

She began to study the newspapers. She no longer read merely the comic strips but carefully examined the photos which headlined the news. It was an alien world, full of society people and actresses and murderers. She would read

the captions and frown, feeling hot and cold chills up her spine. She was so outside the world! Where was it, who took the pictures, why was there never anything in it she knew about? Everyday there were notices of deaths, engagements, weddings, balls, horse races, the latest arrivals at famous resorts, of things and names and events completely outside her sphere. Why wasn't there something about Terry's divorce in the papers or the visit of her Philadelphia and Boston cousins or her Cousin Frieda's engagement party or Miriam and David's love affair or something about papa who was a Democrat and manager of a big bakery business? It irritated her to look at pictures and read of people who didn't seem to exist anywhere except in newspapers. At least the people in the comic strips were only make believe and she could understand and enjoy them, but the others! For that reason, she liked the homey columns which talked about kitchen recipes and dress patterns and letters received from ordinary people named Ruth and Mrs. G and Plain Stenographer. She read the letters last, noticing how important things like love and jobs and family problems were. She did not always agree with the answers and wondered if the people really did what they were advised to do. It bothered her when she dreamed of someone whose picture had been in the newspaper. She would see the actress and talk to her and be with her in the court and then go home with her and look at all her clothes and play with her dog - and then she would wake up wondering if the actress had dreamed about her, too. And of course she knew the actress hadn't, that the actress didn't even know her name and wouldn't even recognize her if she saw her, because the world was so much bigger than the one she lived in that she didn't know her own cousins who lived in Europe and wouldn't recognize them if she met them on the street tomorrow.

Papa took them to a big New Year's Eve Party given by the Lodge and Ladies Auxiliary of the Roumanian Avenue Society. Addie got her first evening gown for it, a blue chiffon with a ruffled cape worn over the shoulders for sleeves, and she had a pair of blue satin slippers with heels almost as high as mama's. Mama took her to the beauty parlor and her hair was waved and made into Castle clips over her ears and had a big bun in the back. Beatrice couldn't imagine how Addie had suddenly grown so much hair until mama explained that they used rats to stuff the side clips and bun with. Beatrice looked horrified.

Oh mama, said Addie crossly, you never tell anything right, the stuffing is just a ball of hair, not rats at all.

Anyway, mama and Addie looked pretty cold in their evening gowns and Beatrice was glad to be wearing her serge sailor outfit instead. Papa looked like a millionaire, he had on a tuxedo and pearl buttoned silk shirt and satin lapels and white carnation and spats. If he only wasn't so fat, Beatrice protested, the way he sticks his belly way out!

The taxi took them slowly along the dark icy streets, its chains creaking stubbornly against the wheels. The party was held in a big hall over a restaurant. They climbed up a red carpeted stairway towards music, light and voices. They checked their coats and hats at a small cubby hole in the wall, where two men were shouting and hurrying behind some clothing racks. Beatrice saw at once that it was going to be a big party. Long wide tables went around the hall forming a horseshoe. Tables, walls and ceiling were decorated. Colored balloons floated from strings overhead. The musicians were at one end of the horseshoe, near the kitchen doors. The waiters were standing by. A little boy went sliding down the center of the floor but he was soon lost in the crowd of

grownups. There were many new faces, new names; papa and mama introduced the family. People said they knew them when, where, there, then. Beatrice was the image, they said. Addie, too. And Ben had the same coloring, the same eyes. Such lovely children, so glad, they said. They were all compatriots, all Roumanian Americans. A big picture of Queen Carmen Sylva hung on the back wall, with Roumanian and American flags on either side.

A fat man pointed to it with his cigar. A wonderful lady she was, a real queen, the prettiest one in all Europe. Then he wagged his cigar at mama and at Beatrice and shook his head. Prettiest girls in the world come from Roumania, he said, nothing prettier than a Roumanian beauty, believe me, I've seen them all. And he winked goodnaturedly.

Jimmie and Lottie Martel arrived with their children. Hello, kid, he said to Beatrice, I see your papa thinks you're worth ten bucks for a party, too.

Ten, said mama, he told me five!

Jimmy laughed. So what, he said, ain't she worth two five dollar tickets? Look what you've got, a double prize winner! Everybody laughed.

Well, if Jimmie's started joking, said his wife, I guess the party's going to be good. Al put his hands in his pockets and rocked on his heels, his smile like his father's. Maxine's slanty eyes in a round moon face made her look Chinese. She put her arm through her mother's and whispered. The two began to laugh, looking at each other.

Something funny, said Jimmie, and I don't know it? He grabbed his wife and daughter to either side of him and growled.

You and Al have your secrets, said Lottie, and we girls have ours. Jimmie backed away doing a tap dance. It made Beatrice happy to see them.

Well, now you've met papa's friends, said mama, the poker party boys, and she pointed to a group of men where papa was apparently enjoying himself. They

didn't look like much, Beatrice decided, but she noticed they had the same manner of talking, of seeming a little richer and more important than the others. One was a big man with an even bigger diamond ring than papa's. His face was good-looking but not at all friendly. His eyes looked around the room without seeing anyone and then came back to the group while he talked. A tall, gray haired lady came up and touched his arm. She wore a black lace dress with a long string of pearls around her neck.

Who's she, asked Beatrice, nudging.

Mama squinted, then leaned down and whispered, that's the ladies chairman. The man she's talking to is the president.

Beatrice gasped, then remembered pictures she had seen in the newspaper and realized that mama meant the president of papa's lodge and not the president of the U. S. She prepared herself to be very polite and dignified, as she had been with Mr. Schumann, papa's boss, so that she could show Mr. President she was the daughter of Somebody, as papa would want her to. Mr. Greenstein. Her chin went up. His name wasn't any better than Berger, even if he was president. She pretended to be not at all impressed and hardly looked at him after giving him a queenly handshake. Mrs. Greenstein was much nicer; she was friendly with everybody and seemed very anxious to have all the ladies know one another.

Then the musicians began to tap on their instruments and the center of the floor was cleared. Soon groups of dancers formed in open circles, arms linked shoulder high and feet stamping as they circled in one direction and then in the opposite direction. It was the same kind of dance Beatrice had seen at a wedding. She joined her arm on mama's and began a new circle. In a little while it was as large as any other and it was fun swaying and kicking and stamping first one way and then the other, feeling the weight of the whole circle leaning. The music lasted a long time, repeating the same tune over and over. The rhythm got

quicker, the floor shook,the room turned round and round, and then there was a burst of applause as the breathless groups broke armholds and fell apart. Laughter and cheers thumped against walls and ceiling. The waiters stood on guard in front of their carefully set tables, smiling, nervous. Then there was a waltz that changed to quick time and then to slow, and a few brave couples whirled around, clinging to each other and to the trailing skirts that somehow managed to tangle underfoot. Mama urged Addie to dance with Beatrice. Beatrice let Addie lead because Addie was taller but it was make-believe because Beatrice was a better dancer and knew more steps. Afterwards, everybody clapped and Beatrice returned to mama's side, her eyes shining under a mask of restrained joy.

Ben grinned at her and said, gee you got a lot of nerve, wish I had.

Beatrice laughed. What are you afraid of? I'll dance with you. But Ben put his hands behind his back to prevent himself from nibbling on his tie and shifted awkwardly from one leg to the other, waiting for the banquet to begin.

The invitations had been numbered and each person had to find his numbered seat at the table. Beatrice was disappointed with hers because once she sat down, there was just Addie on one side and Ben on the other and the table in front of her, and she couldn't see past mama and papa, and the people facing her across the room were too far away. So she got interested in the favors and the flowers and the menu and the balloons and everything close at hand. Papa had a tin horn and mama a paper blower with a feather at the end. Beatrice and Ben exchanged their drumsticks and tambourines. Addie was satisfied with her whistle which blew a shrill high note. They laughed at each others' hats, silly fringy things tied to a rubber band.

Now the waiters had the floor and they scurried about busily. It was a sumptuous meal and the music, voices and laughter accompanied it to the end. By the time the cigars had been passed around and the brandies served with demi-

tasse, it was midnight. The New Year came in with a roll of drums, flashes of electric lights, horns, rattlers and cheers. People embraced joyously, drunkenly. There were cries of toast, toast, and soon everyone stood at attention, glass in hand, while the president made a short speech to greet the new year and wish each and all a healthy, prosperous and happy 1921. More noise and cheers followed, then the music started up the popular Roumanian folk dance. The circle spread and grew in the middle of the floor, the men with their arms clenched behind their backs, the women with their hands on hips. How they stamped, swayed, kicked, each remembering steps taught in childhood. Then came more speeches, jokes, audience uproars and applause. It was familiar subject matter: the new world, steerage boats, Ellis Island, greenhorns, no more ghettos and pogroms, cousins and factory jobs, being boarders on the old East Side, and now this lodge made up of countrymen and friends coming together to celebrate.

The faces and the voices pushed away the smoke, the food; the balloons drifted down and burst, to lie with the streamers and confetti on the floor. Beatrice felt herself shrinking to a pinpoint. It was not her party, these were not her friends. The jokes, the talk. What had she to do with them? It was not her language they were speaking, they belonged to a world preceding hers. These people who had drifted from the old world, who had looked and found what they wanted, who now joked and laughed, united in their sameneses and togetherness, had nothing for her, meant nothing to her. She felt alone, cut-off. What was her world? Where did she belong? She grew sleepy, feeling the waves of the new world lapping around her ears, drowning out the noise and smoke and faces around her. The future was a dim roar somewhere far off. She wished she were back in school again, safe in the world she knew.

They slept late on New Year's Day and had breakfast in the afternoon. They all looked tired and acted like strangers who had once been friends. Papa and

Ben went for a walk. Addie went to tell Pearlie Linder and Anna Weaver about the party and to find out what they had done. Mama busied herself in the kitchen, trying to decide what to prepare for early supper. Beatrice read through her year's diary to see how many blank pages she could save. She frowned at the things she had thought important enough to set down, noticed that her handwriting had grown careless after the first few careful entries, was perplexed by meaningless phrases. Something she had eaten for lunch, facts about new clothes, Teddy's haircut, Mrs. De Vries, test marks, the weather, quarrels with her friends, titles of movies she had seen. She shook her head and sighed; only the nice leather cover was worth saving. She ripped out her year's existence.

Stick mad with needles and pins - yes, there had been lots of days when she hadn't been on speaking terms with Birdie or Elsie or Edna. And once she had sent a representative to Carl to tell him she would never speak to him again because he had snatched her rubber band ball on the street and run away bouncing it up in the air. And when she met him the next time, she tossed her head and said, tell Carl that Beatrice says she won't make up friends with him until he apologizes. Because when you were mad with someone, you didn't really talk to him using you and I, but you said, tell him or tell her, to show that you weren't friends anymore. But Carl had only laughed at her, saying boys didn't talk like girls, and what was the difference since she was talking to him anyhow? Oh no she isn't, Beatrice told him, she's mad at Carl, he knows why. Why, challenged Carl. He knows why very well, she said, trying not to smile into his big soft brown eyes, and besides, she said, she doesn't want him to talk to her either, not till he says I'm sorry. He, she, said Carl, you're talking to me right now, aren't you? The scene came back and she laughed over it, thinking how silly girls were. She wished she were a boy. This way, when a girl ran around and played rough games, she was called a tom-boy, like Maggie. Maggie even played baseball with the boys. She grabbed the bat, spat on her hands,

socked the ball, then ran and slid, her black curls flying about her face. Ben wouldn't let her play boys' games. Did Ben have more fun than she did? All she could think of was the way papa beat him, running around the table with the long bread roller in his hand, ready to murder him for not practicing on his violin or for getting into a street fight or some other bad thing that papa said only bums did. Papa never hit her or Addie, and no matter how mad he got with mama, he never touched her. Because he was a gentleman. Beatrice wondered what made it right for a gentleman to do or not do certain things. Lots of things she was told about children didn't seem right to her at all. Like when they said children should be seen and not heard, that they must never talk back, that they must do everything they're told. Her jaw denied it. Suppose someone told you to jump off the roof or go to hell? Grownups weren't always right, they didn't know everything! So why should children be seen and not heard? Didn't God give them mouths to talk with, minds to think with, eyes to see with and everything else grownups had? She decided to keep the unused pages of her diary. She could cut more paper the same size and tie the book with a rubber band. It would be good for drawings or something. She wished she could draw.

She couldn't go back to school, she came down with a sore throat. Tonsillitis, she hated it, hated herself for not being brave like Ben and going to the hospital to have them taken out. She could hardly breathe, and cried when she had to swallow. Her head ached, her body. She had to take the yellow medicine and gargle with the red, three times a day. She had to lie in bed, with towels around her neck smelling of vinegar, and a hot waterbag at her feet. While the clock ticked on - time for the yellow medicine, time to gargle with the red, time to change the towel, time to heat the waterbag. The days passed painfully, with nothing to look at but the window opening on a dull alley. And then a physic and an enema and still another day in bed and then the weekend to walk

around the house in flannel slippers and bathrobe to get used to being up and eating regularly again.

Mrs. De Vries said she was paler, thinner. For Mrs. De Vries' sake, she drank the milk and raw eggs mama fixed for her. She shut her eyes, took quick gulps without breathing. Raw eggs, ugh, so slimy. And there was cod liver oil, which even orange juice couldn't help. She thought of the Eskimos, how they rubbed oil over their faces and bodies, how they lived in continual winter and were cold the whole year round. Ice, ice, go away, come again some other day. The Eskimos couldn't say that. She was glad she wasn't an Eskimo. Why did they live there? She wouldn't.

She worked hard to catch up in school so that she wouldn't be left back at the end of the month. Mrs. De Vries laughed and pinched her cheeks, saying, I wish the right ones would worry as much as you do. Beatrice held her hand anxiously, not daring to ask the question that was troubling her. Would Mrs. De Vries keep the class next term? If not - She dared not think. She could fail in all her tests and tell papa it was because she had been sick. A Berger left back for the first time in P. S. 40, how the children would look at her, talk. Eva, Hattie, Lester, Dick, all her classmates promoted to 5A. But if she had Mrs. De Vries again? The problem bucked at her heart. She counted the days, worrying. When Mrs. De Vries teased the class about their final tests, saying, I hope you do as well next term, her heart tightened and began to pound. Who are we going to have, someone called out. Mrs. De Vries' eyes twinkled. Why, she asked, what difference does it make? Lots of difference, Beatrice muttered. Mrs. De Vries threw back her head, her arms crossed at her waist. I bet you'll be glad to get rid of me, she laughed. Oh no we won't, voices cried out, we want you! Go on, she said, you'll forget me as soon as you get a new teacher. I'll never

forget you, Beatrice whispered behind her hands, not as long as I live, never! She heard class protests and denials, the children saying out loud the things she had been thinking.

It gave her an idea. During composition, she asked for a second sheet of paper. Why, said Mrs. De Vries, did you make a mistake? For a second, Beatrice stood there straining towards the lie. Mrs. De Vries asked to see her paper. She had written a composition about next term, pouring out her heart. She waited, her face crimson, wondering if Mrs. De Vries would think she was trying to flatter her just to - Mrs. De Vries looked up; her thin eyelids were red. Well, Beatrice, she said, I think this is a fine composition. She put an A on top of it in red ink and laid it aside, then clasped her slim fingers together quietly. But may I have another sheet of paper, please, Mrs. De Vries? I don't see why not, the teacher said and handed it to her without any more questions. On yellow scratch paper, Beatrice wrote the letter, then when she was satisfied, she copied it on the good sheet, blotted it carefully and placed it in her note book.

She would not let the children touch it; she read it to them in secret, in a corner of the lunch yard, and told them they could sign it upstairs in their best ink handwriting. The letter passed secretly from desk to desk. By the time the study period was over, Beatrice had her letter back with two long lists of names, one side for the boys' names and one side for the girls' names. The list continued to the bottom of the sheet and half way down the other side. It had the regular school heading and date in the upper right corner and read: Dear Mr. Lansing, Class 4B1 is writing you to ask if we can have Mrs. De Vries for our teacher next term. We will all work hard and be very good. We love her very much. Will you please do us this big favor? Thank you. Yours truly, Class 4B1. No one had made a mistake or a blot; the margins were even, the writing clear. Lester

had a big pocket in his boy scout shirt. Beatrice slipped the letter across the aisle to him and signalled him to take it to the office. Lumbering, shy, he walked up to Mrs. De Vries who was writing the homework on the board and asked if he could take the wooden room-pass. When he returned, Mrs. De Vries was sitting on his desk, asking questions about their geography lesson. No one could discover from Lester's face or posture what the outcome of the letter had been.

Half an hour later, the door opened and Mr. Lansing came in. Mrs. De Vries looked surprised and beckoned Eva to take charge. Eva jerked her dress free of the fold where it always got caught behind and came forward slowly. Then she stood to one side of the wall map and looked at Mr. Lansing hesitantly. Go ahead, he said. Mrs. De Vries handed Eva the rubber-tipped pointer. She dropped it, picked it up hurriedly, and loudly began, where is the capital of Canada? At that, Mr. Lansing's grin became a chuckle. Mrs. De Vries bit her bottom lip. There were giggles and guffaws. Eva blinked in confusion. So you're going to work hard and be very good, eh, Mr. Lansing said to the class. Eva's face relaxed, she put the pointer behind her. And you love your teacher very much, eh? Well, so do I, he said and put his arm around her. Mrs. De Vries pouted reprimandingly. Now, I'm going back in there to talk with her, in private you know, he said with a sly wink, and you - he nodded toward Eva - what's your name, Eva, all right, you give the lesson as a favor to me, eh? One good turn deserves another, you know! The giggles were hushed as Mr. Lansing drew Mrs. De Vries up the aisle and into the wardrobe closet at the back of the room. He clowned with the sliding door, popping his head in and out. As soon as the door closed, there was a rumble of voices. He's going to do it! We're going to have Mrs. De Vries again! I bet he's kissing her! Eva rapped at the map with her pointer,

where is the capital of Canada, come on, raise your hands! In a little while, Mrs. De Vries emerged smiling and pleased. Tall, lanky Mr. Lansing was at the door in a few long strides. Girls blew kisses, boys waved thanks. O. K. SAL, see you next term, he said and shut the door behind him.

No one was left back and except for end-term report cards and a change of books, the new term began without interruption. Beatrice remembered to thank God for hearing her prayers and helping her. Oh God, she said, I never want another teacher. Let her stay with me all the way through 8B, all the way through high school, even college. She's so smart, so wonderful.

Papa was very pleased. He sent Mrs. De Vries a big box of candy. You work hard, he told Beatrice, and I bet you get a better education with Mrs. De Vries than any pupil in the whole city. A fine school, P. S. 40, believe me, I'm glad you're in it. And to mama he said, what a country. I bet if you paid a thousand dollars a year, you couldn't find a better school in Europe. And what does it cost me here, taxes.

Mama shook her head. Sure, she said, America, where else? Everyday something new: movies, electric lights, telephones, sinks, washtubs, stoves, toilets, what haven't they thought of! You don't even need a sewing machine anymore, you go to the store, buy what you want and come home again. Laundry you can send out. Rugs you can clean and store in a safe place. Trains, schools, victrolas, what not!

Ben laughed. Gee whizz, if you keep on skipping, you'll soon catch up to me!

Papa pursed his lips. If you two had her brains, he said, I wouldn't need to worry.

Addie snickered. Sure, give her a swell head, she thinks she owns the world

already!

G'wan, you're just jealous 'cause Bee's smarter than you, said Ben.

Huh, said Addie, look who's talking. What did you ever do if you're so smart, I'd like to know?

Ben put his hands on his hips and repeated mockingly, what did you ever do if you're so smart, I'd like to know.

Addie glared. I won't even waste my breath on you! Beatrice imitated Ben imitating Addie. At that, Addie burst into tears and turned on papa. See, they don't even have any respect for me... and it's your fault... they're just taking after you!

Papa's chuckle faded. Stop that! You're not so big I can't take a strap to you. Maybe then you'll have a real reason to cry.

Addie dashed out of the room. Fourth term high school and treated like that, she would kill herself, throw herself into the river!

And you, miss, papa said, pointing to Beatrice, I don't like your manners either.

He, she exclaimed, why, what have I done?

It's all right, said papa, don't look so innocent, you've got a long way to go to be perfect. He took his newspaper into the next room.

Beatrice stared at Ben in dismay. Ben grinned and winked at her. Don't worry, kid, he just said that to - you know. Beatrice didn't. Well, he said, stretching, one more year to finish my sentence. Beatrice watched him leave, wondering what <u>he</u> meant. Could it be that everyone was crazy?

Yes, said mama, that's how it is. Nobody can take an education away from you. Once you have it, it's yours for as long as you live. Like the story of the ship. I never told it to you? Well, this ship was sailing from a country

where life had become terrible for the Jews. Everybody wanted to leave. They put their belongings together, everything they could lay their hands on, clothes, jewelry, money, merchandise - you know. Only one man didn't take anything. He was the rabbi, teacher as we call him. He came just as he was, in his little hat and long black coat. He didn't even have his books. His house, his synagogue, they had burnt everything. At last the ship left. It was loaded to the full. How frightened the merchants were, how worried. Only the rabbi wasn't frightened. He walked around by himself, thinking of nothing else but what was in his head. And then, one day, a big storm came. Mama's voice dropped, letting the fact of a big storm sink in. Such a storm, so big, the wind shook the ship like a piece of paper. It rocked this way, that way. The water came up on all sides. Finally the captain said they would have to leave it, and he ordered everybody into the lifeboats. Such a wailing as started! My jewels, the merchants cried, my goods, my money! You can imagine. But what could they do? It was bad enough that the boat was drowning. They would be lucky if they could save their lives. Well, I don't have to make it a long story. With the help of God, they managed to reach land. And who do you suppose was the richest man of them all? The rabbi, of course! You see, my children, he said, what a man carries in his head he never loses, but the rest? So the Jews learned their lesson and that's why, ever since, they believe in a good education.

Beatrice thought about that story for a long time. If she were shipwrecked, what would she be able to do? She couldn't be a rabbi; maybe a teacher like Mrs. De Vries. A doctor would be all right, except he would need his black bag. A singer, of course. And a lawyer would still have his voice to talk. Only business people would suffer, like salesmen, shopkeepers, bankers.... the list went on as she catalogued all the different kinds of people. And papa, wasn't he a business man? But papa was smart and had lots of brains. He could do anything.

Didn't mama say he had done all sorts of work before he became manager of the bakery company? He had been a dry goods salesman, he had worked in a dress factory cutting patterns for ladies' styles, he had been a street car conductor, then a ticket agent on the elevated line. And papa knew about houses and bookkeeping and wine making and food. He could do anything he put his mind to, mama said, even if he hadn't studied in school. Had he ever learned about managing an office? And in English, too, all by himself. He was in charge of American workers and dictated letters to Miss Scott and made out reports and handled the whole business. And didn't he have a notary's license? And the framed certificate showing he had been comptroller of the treasury? And wasn't he a member of the Democratic Party, a friend of borough presidents and the mayor and the governor and all the Tammany leaders?

But when papa came to school to see how she and Ben were getting along, Beatrice felt miserable. The rolling door slid open on its track, a belly appeared and was wedged there till it could push the door wider open,and she knew whose it was before she could see papa's face. How the children giggled! And then when he talked with Mrs. De Vries, how unEnglish his English sounded! Not that Mrs. De Vries seemed to notice, but to Beatrice's ear the accents and words were like fire. She could hardly wait to see him go. Instead, he asked Mrs. De Vries to let her take him to the office to see Mr. Lansing.

In the corridor she walked along angrily. Why do you have to come, nobody else's father comes to school! The kids will laugh at me all day long! Papa's stride was confident. He knew what he was doing and didn't have to answer to her for his actions. Not yet, by George! At the door of the office she hesitated. Oh papa, please, why don't you go home, you've seen Mr. Manley and Mrs. De Vries, we're doing our work all right - Papa's finger tap-pushed her on the shoulder.

Mr. Lansing was busy, Mrs. Kilpatrick said affably. Papa took a seat on

the bench, his coat and hat propped over his crossed knee. Beatrice glanced sideways at him. Supposing his buttons popped, she thought viciously. Mrs. Kilpatrick's round face smiled sympathetically. Papa creaked on the bench as he turned and straightened Beatrice's bangs with his hand. Then he took his handkerchief from his upper pocket and wiped her eyes and mouth. She suffered in silence, feeling Mrs. Kilpatrick's eyes on them. As soon as Mr. Lansing was free, she asked Mrs. Kilpatrick's permission to return to her room. I don't want to miss my spelling lesson, she said. Papa stepped solidly into the principal's office.

And now they got ready for Ben's barmitzvah. He had finished his studies at Hebrew school, he was about to become thirteen, he was entering the responsibilities of manhood. Papa hired the hall where Anne and Eddie had been married a year and a half ago. Invitations were printed, announcing the occasion. The menu and price for the dinner were fixed. There were to be flowers for the family table, cigars for the men, cognac and wine and brandy ordered for sixty guests. Ben's suit was bought downtown and a gold watch selected from samples brought by Mr. Katz to the house. Ben rehearsed his barmitzvah speech by the hour. He would say it in Hebrew, then Yiddish, then English. It was his vow before God's witnesses to be a man, a loyal Jew, a good son and brother...

Mama wept. Papa blew his nose. Ben in his silk shawl and man's hat, wearing his first pair of long trousers, speaking earnestly and carefully, every word measured by rhythm and pace - how wonderful he looked, how handsome, manly and intelligent. The rabbi teacher nodded his head continuously, approving, remembering. Everyone at the long table listened gravely. Some remembered the first initiation, the birth circumcision of the male child. The men looked serious, the women looked humble, Beatrice waited. Ben, her brother, putting away childish things, taking up his duties... how sacred the vows, the promises

before them all. She rushed up to kiss him, but oh, even his kiss was no longer the boyish, fun-loving, hearty kind of kiss she knew. He hardly smiled, as he shook hands, thanking each one for the congratulations, the praise. Oh, everyone could see he was a man, changed from that moment on! Never would papa raise his arm, never would mama fondle and protect him again. The men would talk to him as one of them. The women treat him with respect. The quarrels with Addie would end. The games, their fun together. Beatrice felt she was watching Ben walk through a door. And now he was on the other side, walking the path his feet had been moving towards for thirteen years. And she mustn't call him back, must let him go to follow in the footsteps of all those before him. Ben was a man, a Jew.

And now time itself was change. Right there and then it was changing. Something of the here and now was disappearing, entering the past. Addie would be sixteen next, a young lady ready to take her place with the grown ups, no longer attached to mama's apron strings, but ready to wear an apron of her own. And mama and papa getting older. Mama getting stout and heavy, her teeth giving way to gold caps and bridge work. Papa gray where he wasn't bald, his sleep sessions longer and more frequent. Yesterday, Long Ago, Before - Beatrice blinked back the frightening panorama of so much memory. When I was a little girl... mama bending over the clothes in the bath tub... the rush to the hospital... white glaring lights overhead... the good-looking doctor with the small blonde moustache... mama crying **thief** through the fire escape window... crowding in the cellar to hide from the Huns... the gas light... looking into people's windows from the train... running off to school that first day... Gus in the collar...

She asked mama where all the family pictures were and took them out of the drawer. Mama in her wedding dress, stiff with veil and bouquet, standing beside a papa once slim and young. Papa seated, wearing the same confidence then as

now, and mama's troubled eyes unchanged. Each picture a frozen fragment, a moment at standstill in time past. Papa in a short-sleeved, knee length bathing suit, withouttrace of later girth, his skin light and smooth as a girl's. Papa in a summer suit and straw hat, hiding his foreign birth behind the current style of young America. Pictures of grandma and grandpa, family groups, relatives. That was Eunice and Paul when they were engaged. That was Uncle Nathan's family when Nettie was a baby. Frank was the handsome one, his blond moustache just coming in. Sam was married to Sarah and had two sons now. Emma was married to Simon and had two girls. ... For a minute, she didn't recognize Tanta Mutter. And who was the strange man with the curled moustache? She picked out the five boys. The girl was Alice of course. And Gene in the middle, his eyes black. She laughed at herself as a baby, clinging to mama's hand. Ben's mouth wore a crooked grin. Addie looked pig-tailed and scared. She examined mama's face carefully, noting the hair streaked with gray, the eyes ringed with worry. The dress was long, pulled tight around the waist, the bosom high, the skirt and sleeves trimmed with ribbon. She kissed the picture, wishing she could remember that day. The rest she did remember: Beatrice on a white horse looking at the birdie, the Gypsy and the Flower girl at the May Day party, a picture of Ben in the classroom, a family scene in the country and another on the beach... So few to remember... And even if there were pictures for everything, all the faces, places, days and happenings, how would they help any more than remembering did? The mind was a camera, too. But like the clock that went on ticking, repeating the same hours and moments every day, you knew that remembering was not the same as that which was happening and sliding into the past right now. Eight o'clock today was not the same as eight o'clock yesterday, one Monday was not like any other Monday, no two January's could ever be the same. So why should it be different for her and mama and papa and Addie and Ben? Look how they were changing, how they had

changed... I'll never change, she protested fiercely, I'll always be the same! No matter what happens, I'll still be me, inside, I, Beatrice Berger, because I'll never forget, not anything, never!

Two things consoled her. It was still the same in school, having the same room, the same seat, the same teacher. And she was still mama's baby. That was important. Mama had been the baby of her family and Grandma Stella had been the baby of her family. Now that Addie and Ben were getting so big, she realised how important it was, because she would always be mama's baby. She looked at Addie's new friends from high school and Ben's new interests with disdain. They were hardly ever at home, glad for the least excuse to slip out. Why, she'd rather be at home with mama than with anyone, any where! Her love for mama grew into a passion. Even if mama was playing cards or talking to anybody, Beatrice would come rushing in and throw her arms around mama's neck and kiss and kiss her. The women seemed annoyed, displeased. Beatrice didn't care, she loved mama and knew they were jealous. But once, mama was losing at poker and she was in the middle of a game and there was lots of money on the table and mama pushed her away angrily, saying, did you ever, a child can't leave her mother alone for a minute! Beatrice drew back, trembling. Her heart bounced into her throat, there was a sting in her nostrils, and she fled. Mama loved her poker game more than she loved her!

She felt cut off again, alone and joyless in a hostile world. She was a step-child, an orphan, worse than a buggar without a place to sleep. Addie had her friends in high school, Ben had his secret club, papa had his dates downtown with the Grand Street boys, mama had her poker. <u>She</u> had nothing. <u>She</u> was the baby of the family, the last and least important one. It meant nothing. Maybe in other families, it meant something, but in her family, no. Addie was the oldest, Ben was the only son, but <u>she</u> was just extra. When Addie's clothes got too small

or old, then she got them. When the family was invited anywhere special, she was left out. She was the after thought, the extra ticket for the theatre party, the one who was in the way, the unnecessary nuisance. She wished she was in the cradle again, wished it was a year ago when Ben had played with her, wished she was dead. She counted the years ahead till she would be thirteen, sixteen. How independent she would be, proud, clever, successful! She would become a famous lawyer, maybe an actress. Then she would show them. Baby of the family! She would have her own clothes, her own money, her own friends, be important! Then mama would be sorry, no baby to love, no baby to talk to at home. Mama at the poker table faded, and again she saw mama sitting alone in the kitchen waiting all night for papa to come home, mama in her bare feet and nightgown and braids sitting sleepily on the edge of the bathtub, mama tucking each one in bed, mama scrubbing, cooking, sewing, ironing... Her love for mama flowed back into her heart, emptying it of hurt and revenge. She would go back and sit quietly next to her, maybe she could bring mama luck. Cards, what devils hid in them, making people win or lose. She would go and watch, maybe they would be good.

April brought mama's and papa's twentieth wedding anniversary. Twenty years, said mama, to think I should have lived to see the day, my children grown and well, thank God! Believe me, it's something to be thankful for, a husband who has always been a good provider, a nice home, a daughter who's almost a young lady, a son who's almost a man - And I'm only forty years old, a young mother. And she laughed and talked about having a big party and papa took them all downtown on a shopping tour and then they went to a Roumanian restaurant to eat and then took a taxi home and mama said, why not, it only happens once in a lifetime, and plans for the party were made just as they had been for Ben's barmitzvah, and Addie kept squeezing mama's hand and looking at Beatrice and saying, I'm next, I'll be sweet sixteen

in June, remember, and Beatrice just sat and wondered why nothing good ever happened to her.

Addie had a turquoise colored chiffon dress and a string of pearls and dyed silk pumps with a pointed toe and French heel and her hair was put up at the beauty parlor and she even used mama's cosmetics. Beatrice wore a two piece white dress with red embroidery and a high neck, Russian, but she felt very kiddish in the low heels and round toe. To pacify her, mama powdered her nose and gave her a pair of long silk stockings, her first, which she immediately snagged and ripped. Mama looked beautiful, her plumpness tightly corseted. She wore a beige crepe dress trimmed with heavy braid and a beige turban and shoes.

Don't I look like a bride, she said and strutted around the room, then added, a bride of forty? Addie whirled, holding her chiffon skirt outstretched. Sure, said mama, you're a young girl, what do you expect? Wait till you're my age, you'll be size forty-two, too! Beatrice looked down at her flat, shapeless body and pursed her lips. Just like a stuffed board, she thought, no bust, no waistline, no hips, nothing. Chubby, everyone called her, moon-face. She looked in the mirror and blushed. Her black hair and eyes were striking, set off by the richly embroidered red on white; her face was smooth, her nose small, her lips well-shaped, and red.

Huh, spied Addie, if you aren't conceited, Miss Swell-Head!

Jealous, challenged Beatrice.

Addie's eyebrows went up. Who, me? Well, I like that! Ma, did you hear that? She thinks she's prettier than I am!

Don't I look like you, ma, Beatrice said. Mama's manicured hands cupped her face lovingly.

Like me, she repeated? You're a thousand times prettier. Maybe once I looked like that, too.

See, said Addie triumphantly. I'm the one who looks like mama, not you!

I'd like to know where, said Beatrice, you with your skinny arms and legs, your thin brown hair, your mouth, your nose -

Nose, exclaimed Addie, look who's talking, I suppose you think you have mama's nose, with that hook at the end.

What hook, demanded Beatrice, feeling the contours of her nose, my nose is just as straight as yours and nicer because it's not so fat! Mama shook with laughter, painfully holding her stomach in behind her corset. Stop it, she said, both of you. There aren't two sisters so pretty as you anywhere and yet you quarrel about who looks like me! If I looked like either one, I'd be tickled to death. What mother wouldn't be proud to have such daughters?

At last papa returned with Ben in a taxi, bringing two corsages of flowers, one for mama and one for Addie. At that, Beatrice stormed and stamped, saying that they might as well leave her home altogether - Papa hustled her out of the house, reminding her curtly that taxis cost money and that he didn't intend to stand around waiting for her to make up her mind.

After that, her discontent gnawed and grew until she became cranky about everything. Scoldings, punishments, secret treats - nothing was effective. She remained stubborn, pale, her eyes smouldering behind a nameless grief. No one could figure out why. Ben paid no attention to her. If she got in his way, he gave her a healthy shove and promptly forgot all about her. Addie left her alone. Mama was worried, aggravated. Papa threatened to send her away to a children's home. Her resentment continued, searching for the slightest pretext, the least justification. She ate heavily, slept heavily, worked intensely and became constipated. The dark rings under her eyes deepened, giving her a brooding stare.

Spring was arriving and with winter in her heart. Nothing good was happening to her. Everything went on in a plain, every day way, bringing nothing, changing nothing.

Papa tried to interest her in winning the gold medal to be awarded the public school child who collected the greatest number of dime bricks. Each booklet contained one hundred dime holes, ten to a page. Papa started her off with ten booklets; when these were filled by friends, neighbors, relatives, store keepers and business associates, papa renewed the order. Addie and Ben complied with their class quota by filling one booklet each. All the rest of the dimes collected went into building Beatrice's record. Through weekly reports from the school, papa kept in touch with her competitors. After a few weeks, the race narrowed to five candidates, then four, then two. Just before the date fixed for the deadline, papa went to see Mr. Lansing, telling him he would top any amount contributed by the contending candidate, a boy in the seventh grade, whose father was the local banker. Mr. Lansing tried to dissuade papa from making it a matter of personal glory, reminding him that the entire campaign had been conceived as an expression of patriotic generosity. For his part, he was satisfied with the school's splendid cooperation; all of the families had shown themselves to be fine citizens. He thought this was going too far. Papa had to be content with the promise that on the day before the deadline he would be notified how the record stood between the two pupils.

But something went wrong because the day after the contest was closed, the Superintendent of Schools arrived and made a long speech before the school assembly about war and sacrifice and heroism, then cleared his throat and lifted the gold medal from the stand beside him. Everyone sat hushed, expectant.

Beatrice's eyes bored a hole in the platform, her hands clasped tightly in her lap. And then the gold medal was awarded to Peter White of 7B1. Beatrice waited till the thunder of applause and cheers diminished. Peter was on the platform, shaking hands with the Superintendent, smiling. He was a blond boy, well built, bright looking. Suddenly, Mrs. De Vries snapped her fingers, beckoning Beatrice to step forward for the honorary certificate. Papa's voice was in her ear - remember now, a good sport - papa's face grim, controlled. He had done his best. He would wave his hand, say never mind, it's all right. His blue eyes would pale, look a little watery. He would blow his nose and walk out quietly, proudly.

Thank you, sir, she said in a fine clear voice, then turned and curtsied to the guests sitting on the platform.

It was papa's disappointment more than hers but it added to the proof that this was not her year. Every dog has his day, mama said. Chinky shows, the children agreed. Her belief was shaken. One day passed into another and nothing happened. In school, the wise quotations continued. If a job is worth doing, it is worth doing well...No one is perfect...There is always something new to learn...No effort is wasted. But Beatrice was not comforted.

Mama said she was foolish to worry. A young child like you. Believe me, you don't know when you're well off. Some day, you'll look back and wish you were a kid again. Beatrice let out a huh, what did she care about some day, Now is what counted, and it didn't count for much! I hope you never have any more troubles than you have today. No responsibilities, no problems about sick children and rent and where to get the next meal from - You're young, pretty, smart, healthy, have a good home and good parents, a bed to sleep in, nice clean clothes, all the food you can eat, plenty of spending money. What more do you want, a child of nine? If anyone were to hear you, they'd laugh.

Go way, you're a silly little fool. What you need is to take your head and knock it on the wall good and hard, maybe then you'll feel better. Beatrice sat, cheek in hand, looking more dejected than ever. Stubborn! Just look at you, sitting for all the world as though you had lost God knows what, a lifetime's savings, all your friends and possessions, your home, your family, everything! Why don't you go out and play like all the other children do? Mama pinched her cheeks roughly. Look how pale you're getting, how thin, look at the rings under your eyes! I'm ashamed what people must think, that I beat you or starve you or put you to work in the house all day long! Beatrice recrossed her legs and lay the other cheek against the other hand. Mama muttered and turned back to her work. Did I ever tell you the story of the peasant and the priest, she asked after a while. Beatrice shook her head. Mama wiped her hands in her apron and sat down. Well, once upon a time there was a poor stupid peasant, an old man who hardly knew his name. All he did was work in his little field, get up, work, sleep, sell a little something, buy a little something, live like that. He didn't know how to read, to write, to talk, nothing. He didn't even change his clothes from one day to the next; he lay down in them and got up in them. A peasant, what do you expect, a big dumb cluck, a boor, a lout. Well, this poor ox lived in a what shall I call it, a big room like a barn, the roof broken, the boards full of cracks and holes, you can imagine, a floor with dirt, straw, stones. What did he know? He was married, had lots of children, how many he didn't know. All right, a house. That's where they ate, slept, lived, you know. Everybody. All on the floor. And naturally they had some chickens and pigs and a cow and a horse, you know, animals like you need on the farm. And naturally the animals lived in the house, too. Where should they go at night or when it rained? In the house. That's how it was with peasants, the animals lived with them. You would think

even a poor stupid peasant could fix a separate barn or a stable for the animals, but why should he? To him animals and people were the same, no better, no worse, they also had to eat and sleep and work. Well, finally it got so bad in that house, what with the dirt from the animals and the children and everything, that even the peasant couldn't stand it. He hardly had place to move, hardly a corner to lie down in. When he came in, he would say phew and almost choke to death. You can imagine. Beatrice clucked her tongue irritably, wishing mama would get on with the story. Instead, mama got up to attend to the soup threatening to boil over.

When she was ready, she continued. Well, as I said, the peasant didn't know what to do. The cow was having a calf, the chickens were hatching eggs, some more pigs were born, and when he tried to count his children, he got mixed up with his fingers and spat on the floor. At last he decided to go visit the priest and tell him his troubles, maybe the priest could help him. In those days they went to the priest for everything. The priest was the doctor, the teacher, the lawyer, God, the government, everything. Outside of the priest, they didn't know from nothing, how big the world was, how many people lived in it, about schools, cities, trains. And things like stores and factories, they never even heard of.

Mama, interrupted Beatrice, the peasant, he went to the priest with his troubles.

That's right, said mama, wait, it's a long story. Beatrice leaned her head against the wall. So one day the peasant took a bath, not in a bathroom, mind you, but behind the house with a pail of water. He scrubbed himself with straw, combed the lice from his hair and beard, then put on his old dirty clothes again. The whole family went to see him off. He walked and walked

all day till he came to the priest's house. It was in the village where all the peasants, their parents and grandparents came when they needed anything. A small village with more fields and houses like the peasant's, more children and animals and chickens, more dirt, more poor dumb peasants. But to them it was the whole world.

I know, said Beatrice, you told me.

Did I, said mama, well, so the peasant went up to the priest's house, wiped his feet on the grass, took off his hat, ran his fingers through his hair and beard once more, then knocked on the door very softly. After a while, the priest opened the door, told him to come in, gave him a chair inside, and asked him what he wanted. Father, said the old peasant because that's what they called their priest, father, I have a lot of troubles. And he began telling the priest about his house, how crowded it was, how many children he had, how all the animals took up so much space, how dirty everything was, how poor he was - like that, he just told the priest what was in his heart. When the old man was finished, the priest got up and walked back and forth in the room, showing the peasant that he was thinking. The priest asked questions and sometimes he answered and sometimes he didn't. Well, my son, said the priest at the end, go home and take the cow out of the house and God will help you.' The peasant got down on his knees, kissed the priest's hand and thanked him. He felt better already. Mama looked at Beatrice to see if she understood.

Well, asked Beatrice, so what happened?

Mama nodded, satisfied. What happened? Well, the peasant did what the priest told him to do and a week later walked all the way back to the village. This time, the priest told him to take the horse out of the house. He did and in another week he was back again. Beatrice looked at mama suspiciously, wondering if she was fooling her. It's true! Week after week, the peasant came

back, excused himself, explained how dirty his house was, how crowded, how poor. And every week the priest told him to take another animal out of the house. First the cow was put outside, then the horse, then the pigs, then the chickens. Finally there were no animals left in the house. But still he wasn't satisfied. So he went back again, stammered, apologized, complained - and he didn't know what to do. The priest was a patient man, he didn't mind the peasant's bothering him at all. When he had finished listening, walking, thinking, he said, my son, God has advised me what to do - go home and take the cow back into the house. Mama crossed her arms above her bosom and studied Beatrice's face expectantly.

Is that all, she asked. Mama nodded. What a dumb story, said Beatrice, first to take all the animals out and then to put them all back. You see, said mama, we're never satisfied. So don't think you have so many worries, you can always have more. Lesson ended, mama went back to her cooking and Beatrice went away disgusted.

Nothing happened, nothing changed, except that now it was May and there was more time to fret in, the days longer, the twilights empty. It was hard to go to bed, hard to fall asleep. After early supper and homework lessons, there was nothing to do but read, play the same old piano pieces, listen to the victrola, pass time till tomorrow. If something would only happen - If she could only think of something new, something Addie never heard of -

It was Ben who instigated the change. The cot was too small for him, he said. His feet stuck out, his back ached in the morning. It was too low for him, too narrow. He didn't like sleeping in the dining-room. Mama suggested he swap places with Beatrice and go back to his old bed in the bedroom. Addie protested. She didn't want to sleep in the same room with him.

By rights, I ought to have a room to myself, she declared. She gave mama a general idea of it, blue papered walls, an elegant dressing table draped in pink satin, window drapes and bed cover to match, a thick blue rug on the floor, a vase of flowers on the night table, a nice little French desk in the corner with drawers that could be locked with a private key, a spacious closet with door mirrors full of gorgeous dresses, hats and shoes.

Mama agreed. Some day, believe me, God willing. And mama went on to tell her what it would be like when she was married to a millionaire who could give her a house in the country with a butler and a maid and a garden and a limousine and a chauffeur and a mink coat and yacht in the summer and Miami in the winter.

Meantime, Beatrice got the cot in the dining-room. It meant she could stay up later when there was company. She thought the cot was fun, it was just the right size for her; she liked its lowness, its narrowness; she could reach out and feel the cold steel on either side the mattress; she could reach down and touch the floor. And she was nearer mama now, separated only by the portieres. Anyway, it was a nicechange. Sometimes she half-woke and heard mama and papa coming in; they would tip toe through the dining-room, brushing by the cot; then the portieres would be drawn and she could hear them whispering and talking behind. Sometimes she waited till their bed lamp was turned off and darkness returned to close her eyes. But once she grew aware of something after darkness, kissing sounds, murmurs, mama's voice rising above whispers, protesting, papa's low, insistent. Then the bed creaked, there was a shifting of bodies, mama sounded vexed, papa's voice thick. Creak, creak, there was a rhythmic motion. Beatrice heard it measure her breathing, as she lay on her pillow, her nose turned slightly to one side. Suddenly she forgot mama and papa, aware of a new rhythm inside her. She felt it carry her down

through the darkness, cut through the night, up and away to somewhere she had never been before. She clung, throbbed, then awoke, suddenly and fully aware. She lay there, not wanting to move, trying to discover what it was that made her body feel so deliciously tingling, so unreal. Her heart quieted, the sweet sensation flowed away, her breath grew regular. Mama thudded softly past her; there was the sound of water running in the bathroom. By the time mama returned, Beatrice was fast asleep.

She could not remember how it had happened but she remembered now other things. Daisy in the country, hinting, snickering, pointing. Addie playing honeymoon. The Sheik of Araby. Goldie pressing, squeezing. Boy and girl jokes. Warnings from mama: never talk to a strange man, come straight home. Babies. Her mind whirled, grew dizzy. Her heart beat in a new uncontrollable way. She trembled, tried not to think or feel, wondering if everybody would be able to tell. For a few days she went around as though possessed, waiting for mama to find her sick, looking for signs on people's faces. It seemed impossible that no one should know her secret, that not mama nor Mrs. De Vries nor her schoolmates nor Addie should have noticed what had happened to her. She kept her eyes averted to ward off suspicion. She heard herself answering clearly and correctly in school when she was called on during a lesson. She saw herself walking and moving and eating, as usual. She began to wonder if it had only been a dream. The doubt persisted until it seemed positive that no one knew or even guessed. Then a slow curiosity took its place. She grew sleepy early, wishing mama and papa would go off on another visit and come in late and wake her as they had the first time. When she discovered that the ecstasy lay within her own power she felt a new strength. Nothing mattered any more, being nine, being in 5A, being the baby of the family, nothing. At last something good had happened to her. At last everything was changed.

It became her own world, a place and time that was detached from everyone and everything outside. There she was alone, but no longer unhappy. She could think of Daisy and Gus and Mr. Adams and all those who had insinuated into her mind an evil meaning, as people from whom she had escaped and no longer had any connection with. She felt clean, safe, apart. She could forget Terry's broken marriage, forget George's trouble with a show girl, forget Jonny, forget Mrs. Weaver's worry, forget the neighborhood gossip about Irene and Sally, forget the newspaper pornography and cheap movie dramas. Her world was beautiful once more. Beauty was this, personal and secret, a physical dream full of wonder and magical fulfillment. Alone under the covers, the day forgotten by the night, the mind and body absorbed by a tremulous act, she discovered her refuge and sanctuary. There she could forget the injustice and stupidity, the evil and the hurt.

So when she walked into mama's room one Sunday morning while mama was still lying in bed and papa was putting on his tie to get ready for a walk before breakfast, she merely stared without any impulse to run or hide. Papa said something quickly in Roumanian and mama rolled over on her back with an exclamatory laugh, pulling the sheet around her. For a second she peered at Beatrice's face, then held out her arms. Beatrice let herself be kissed, then walked to the dresser and put some of papa's eau de cologne on her hair, informing papa she was going out with him for a walk. Nothing in her manner indicated she had seen the red towel between mama's legs and papa's eyes in the mirror meeting hers.

Ready, she asked lightly. Papa whistled for Teddy and together they walked out of the house. On the street she stretched her stride to keep up with him, filling her lungs with the fresh clean air of morning. The stores were closed, the shutters drawn. The street sweeper had already passed. On one

of the high stoops, a door opened and a hand reached out for a milk bottle standing there. At the corner, a man was reading a newspaper, his back against the telephone pole. They walked four long blocks, then turned back. Neither she nor papa spoke all the way except when papa said, that's right, take deep breaths, and when they got back said, now we'll have a good appetite.

Back inside the apartment, he paused and looked in the children's bedroom. Sleeping on such a day! He went in, pulled up the shade, opened the windows and ordered Ben and Addie out of bed. Beatrice went into the kitchen to fix breakfast, hoping she and papa could eat alone. After a while, he came in to make himself a marmaliga, a cake of cooked cornmeal which he ate with brinza cheese and butter. Beatrice made up the coffee pot, heated some fresh milk, poured cream into a pitcher and set the table.

Mama came in when they were starting to eat. A regular balabusta, she said, soon I won't have to cook anything myself, ha?

Papa nodded. You think she's as dumb as those other two, sleeping half their lives away?

Addie stuck her head in the doorway. What's going on here, anyway? My God, only half past eight, I'm going back to sleep, it's Sunday! But when she saw the table set, she changed her mind.

Beatrice moved her chair away. Lazy, sloppy Addie, a fine balabusta she would make! And to think Addie was having a sweet sixteen -

Beatrice gave Gus a very cold handshake at the party. She had begged Addie not to invite him but of course he was first on her list. There were eight boys, eight girls. Mama's bedroom had been cleared for dancing and the portieres taken downto join the two rooms into one. There was going to be a dinner party in the evening for the older people. Ben and Beatrice had chipped in and bought her a pretty string of glass crystals which shone and changed

color according to the light. Papa gave her a black onyx ring with a real diamond mounted in a platinum setting. She wore the beads and the ring and kissed papa in front of all her friends. Papa said that was to keep her finger warm until she got a fine engagement ring and Beatrice saw Gus look away worried. Addie also received toilet articles, silk lingerie, a silver hand-mirror, handkerchiefs, and a box of candy. Then mama set out the punch bowl, sandwiches and cake and said they would now leave the young folks to enjoy themselves by themselves. Addie looked at Beatrice.

I can take a hint, said Beatrice, but remember, I'll never forgive you for this! Your only sister, and you won't let her stay at your sweet sixteen party!

Addie looked nervous, embarrassed. Did I tell you to go?

You ought to be ashamed of yourself, said Anna Weaver in her dry hard voice, a little girl like you wanting to stay with big people.

You haven't got a boy friend, laughed Pearlie, you see, we all have partners!

Cousin Nettie drew Beatrice aside. Just make believe you're leaving, then come back later, you'll see, it'll be all right.

Remember, quavered Beatrice, you didn't invite me!

All right, said papa, you won't invite her to your sweet sixteen party, either. At that everyone laughed and Beatrice ran out into the hall. The family soon joined her, papa saying he didn't want to hang around all day doing nothing, that he could go downtown and be back for the dinner party by evening; mama pleading that they could visit the neighbors, that it wasn't nice to leave the children alone too long.

You see, exclaimed Beatrice, all this trouble because Addie's so selfish!

A fine thing when her own family is thrown out of the house.

Addie appeared at the door. She was flushed, worried. Who said I wanted you to leave? Don't be silly. Please, papa! You know the party won't be the same without you. She turned on Beatrice angrily. It's all your fault, always making mountains out of mole hills. Can't you take a joke? So they all went in to the party and to show everybody that she wasn't stingy or selfish about her birthday, Addie left the door open for whoever cared to come in. The boys and girls were dancing to the victrola records. Every once in a while, they went over to the table to have something to eat, and they seemed to be having a good time. Addie sat by the window and talked with Gus, her eyes flirting with him. It was her party, she felt bold. Papa gave her a strict stare which she pretended not to understand, so he asked everybody to be seated for a little concert. Addie made a face, she didn't want to play. Beatrice felt glad, it served Addie right. She felt scorn, too. Let papa try to boss her party when she was sixteen, huh! But of course Addie would always be a softy, a goody-good tied to mama's apron strings and papa's belt! When Addie had finished Für Elise, The Polish Dance and Nocturne, Beatrice was asked to entertain. She tossed her head and promptly walked over to choose her song-acts. Now she would show them! The boys were amused, they clapped hard and praised her loudly. The girls were polite, made a few cautious remarks and eyed each other misgivingly. Addie let it pass; she had had enough trouble with the past already. Afterwards, there were games and the front room was portiered off for the kissing fees demanded by the postman, the spun bottle, the ghost... Beatrice enjoyed watching the couples pair off and exchange partners, enjoyed the embarrassment and laughter, the suspense and shouts, but she didn't like it when Addie and Gus went inside - they took their time, kissed more than once.

And then it was over, the fun reduced to silence, the boys and girls gone.

The evening ended early for Beatrice; she was not at all interested in Addie's party for older folks. Just for extra presents, what a hypocrite! If people didn't like you well enough to remember your birthday without a party, they could keep their old presents. That's how you knew who your real friends were. When she'd be sixteen - she fell asleep, dreaming.

Mrs. De Vries invited the class to a party at her home the day after school closed. They were to meet in front of the school at ten o'clock, take the ferry at 149 Street and meet her on the Jersey side. They would spend the day, meet her husband Andre, have lunch, play games, and return home at four o'clock. At the last minute, mama said nothing doing, it was too far for a baby to travel all alone, the goyim food would make her sick, school was one thing but this was something else again, it wasn't good to mix with strangers socially...

But I'm not going alone, Beatrice wailed, the whole class is going! I'm ten years old, not a baby! How can the food Mrs. De Vries makes at home hurt me? She's not a stranger, she's my teacher, I've had her a whole year, she's the best friend I have in the world, she loves me!

Papa would have let her go, but mama told him to keep out, it was a mother's business, not a man's and she wasn't letting Beatrice out of her sight. Addie's sixteen, Ben's thirteen, when did they ever go visit a teacher and in New Jersey, no less? I don't care about other mothers, their children aren't mine. You're staying home with me, right here.

Beatrice wept all day; she would never forgive mama! To see where Mrs. De Vries lived, to walk through her house, to eat at her table, to meet her husband, to spend a whole day with her in private, outside of school - she felt like an animal in a trap, a chained dog, a prisoner. She had planned to wear her new summer outfit. Mrs. De Vries would stroke her hair, tell her how

pretty she looked, hold her hand. And Andre would know she was the monitor of the class, one of the smart pupils; maybe Mrs. De Vries would whisper to him, she's my pet, isn't she cute? The children would leave without her, they wouldn't wait. Now they were crossing on the ferry, laughing and singing. Mrs. De Vries would look for her, feel disappointed. Then everybody would forget all about her. What did the house look like? Was Andre tall, blond? She would be the only one missing, all the rest of the class would be there, dressed in their best, behaving beautifully. They had all chipped in to buy Mrs. De Vries a big bouquet of flowers. She would put them on the table in a big vase. The room, what did it look like? A big private house surrounded by trees, a garden with benches and chairs, with Mrs. De Vries moving around gracefully, being the hostess, looking at home, dressed differently, her hair combed in a new way, talking with Andre, making friendly conversation with the children. She would play hide and seek, blind man's bluff, take part in all the games like a big girl. Then lunch, letting the girls help with the trays, serving drinks in tall glasses with straws, and dainty sandwiches, special treats, little cream-filled cookies with colored ices and ice cream...

Suddenly, her own house became ugly, the walls, the floors, the ceilings, the windows that looked out at nothing, the empty lot, the street with its rows of stores and buildings. The kitchen dull, the table unattractive, food as always the same, served the same, eaten the same, everybody and everything the same. It was as though a thick bandage had been taken off her eyes and she could suddenly see. How clearly, miserably. Stupid faces, stupid talk, the way they lived so stupid, all the stupid families, the Singers, Weavers, Hartmans, Fullers, Linders, Goodmans, Stones, Cohens, Hills, with all their stupid friends and relatives, street after street of them with more stores and buildings , more stupid voices and faces, more kitchens and bedrooms, more card

games and fights. No beauty anywhere, no joy or freedom, no anything, nothing to suggest sky and clouds and wind and trees and a world of laughter. Oh Teddy!

They went to the shore for a few days and the ocean was buried in more stupidity, more of the stupid human ways of living. The time wasted over getting the day started, waiting to use the bathroom, finding the clean towel and comb, going for breakfast rolls, ordering meat from the butcher, haggling over the prices of fish, fruit, vegetables, planning the meals, taking turns using the dining room table. It was mama's cousin's bungalow. Tabby was there with her husband and children. Tabby's mother was there, and her aunt. Somehow, they made room for extra sleepers, extra eaters, extra vacationists.

Papa came for an afternoon and left; he had his business, his dates with the boys. There was a quarrel on the beach, mama wanting him to stay.

I come here to save money and you take taxis back and forth, eat downtown, lose God knows how much in pinnochle, go out for a spree afterwards and generally have a good time! Sure, while I sweat and slave with the children! A fine state of affairs, I don't think!

Papa drew in his cheeks and blew. Did I tell you to come here and crowd yourselves like pigs in a stinking bungalow? Go to a hotel, I'll pay the bill!

A fine way to talk about my cousins, said mama, I see them once every ten years, they try to be nice and kind and then you insult them, you put your hat down for a minute and then say goodbye quick!

There wasn't much beach fun: bathing suits were too wet to use twice in the same day, mama was afraid they were getting too much sun, the beach was too crowded for games, and they weren't allowed out of mama's sight.

You might get lost, drowned, God forbid, all the accidents every day!

So it was hanging around the house most of the day and waiting for night. At night they went with mama for a stroll along the boardwalk. There were people eating at noisy stands, voices booming through megaphones, side-shows. They went in to see one. Mama explained the baby incubators. Beatrice stared, horrified. Ugh! Imagine being born like that, where everyone could see you! They looked at big jars with things floating inside: hearts, livers, brains, strange human fish. Ben walked about enjoying himself, doctors studied things like that. Beatrice felt sick and hurried away, not wanting to know what she looked like inside. She preferred the funny mirrors that made you look long and skinny, short and fat, crooked, twisted, lopsided. It was like the game she and Ben played, looking into each other's eyes to see themselves. And it was the same with silver spoons, you saw your face broad and long, the eyes queerly distended, the mouth not yours. They walked through the hall of mirrors, pointing and laughing at each other, mama a giant, Ben a dwarf, Addie a corkscrew, Beatrice a humpty dumpty, shapes moving and changing down the bright corridor. And below the boardwalk, the silent beach, stretching dark to the water's edge, denying the crowds, the lights, the thousand tongued voices. Only the black sky far out, the rise and crash of the waves, something unutterably lonely and empty, as an alternative.

Ten years old, she felt it was important, like coming out of the penny stage. Ten, that was something. When you counted by ones and twos and threes, you could see how small they were, but when you counted by tens, it made a big difference. Being ten put you closer to being somebody. Up to ten, you were still a baby, a penny, a little nothing, but beginning with ten you joined the big people's class, the class of ten to twenty. Now she was just as good as Ben and Addie - ten, thirteen, sixteen, they belonged together. No more flat shoes with round toes for her! And no baby socks and short

dresses any more, either! Ten, ten, ten. Not three or six or eight or nine, but ten. Ten years old. Why did they make dimes so small and nickels so big? It should be the other way. With a dime you could buy two nickel things, ten penny ones. Ten. She looked in the mirror. Had she grown? Had her face changed? Something ought to show the difference. She took some of Mama's powder, added a little rouge and lipstick, put some red polish on her nails. A little jewelry would help. Mama's earrings were for pierced ears; she was afraid to try them, didn't know how to get them through. A string of pearls would do; she wound them twice around her neck, with the clasp against her throat. She tried on different hats, frowned at her bangs, pushed her hair this way and that. She would have to find a new way to comb her hair, get it cut differently. A young lady, definitely. No more kid stuff for her, no more shouting and running and playing a lot of silly games. She would walk like a lady, talk like a lady, act like a lady. How surprised Mrs. De Vries would be. And Dick. Her heart began to beat fast; she couldn't look at her eyes. Love. Was that it? She felt suddenly shy with herself as though someone new had taken possession of her. Was that how it was going to be, a new Beatrice, someone she would have to learn about, like being introduced to a strange girl? The thought frightened her. And what was to happen to the old Beatrice, the one she had lived with all these years, the inside Beatrice who remembered Ben kissing her fingers as he chanted, this little pig went to market, this little pig stayed at home, this little pig had roast beef, this little pig had none, and this little pig cried wee-wee-wee I can't find my way home. Her pinky finger, oh it had changed! She could remember when it had been such a small pink finger, the nail no bigger than a tear. Then she was crying, smearing the rouge and powder on her hands, the old Beatrice feeling like the little

pig who couldn't find its way home. She didn't want to change and forget! She wasn't going to let the new girl drive the old one out; the old one was her best and oldest friend. I'll never leave you, she sobbed, you'll always be with me, all my life, I love you!

The new Beatrice was just for outside, for other people. The real Beatrice she kept inside, to herself. And when she talked to herself in private, when she dreamed and thought and remembered, it was Beatrice as she had always been, the one behind the eyes, the one whose voice nobody heard. The new Beatrice, she argued, was necessary. It was all very well to be the youngest in the family but she wasn't going to be cheated out of her rights. When Ben was ten, she would remind mama - When Addie was ten, she would remind papa - She did all the remembering for them, telling them they couldn't do less for her than they had for the others. Huh, papa would say, when Addie was ten she didn't even get ten cents a week for spending money. What other kid of ten do you know who gets as much as you do? That's all right, she answered, I'm ahead of my age, I skipped, you know!

She insisted on full prices for everything, theatre tickets, train tickets, hotel rates; whatever they were for Addie or Ben, they had to be for her. She didn't want any favors, thank you. When a waiter playfully pinched her cheek, she slapped his hand. Mama was shocked to pieces. Why, retorted Beatrice, I don't even know him! Mama's mouth opened and shut.

I didn't see him pinch your cheek, said Beatrice.

Papa brought home the picture folder in August. It was a new hotel, the biggest and best in the Catskills. Only the richest Jews could afford it. The folder told them all about it. There was an enormous white chateau on the side of a lake, strictly private, with golf course and tennis courts and horse stables and row boats; it had a dining room seating two hundred people, a ball room and hotel orchestra, a game room for children and another for adults, every room with modern beds and private bath; there was a limousine for the exclusive use

of the guests; in short, the hotel had every comfort and luxury ever invented for vacationists seeking rest, pleasure and healthful change. It all sounded very alluring, except the prices. Mama was scandalized.

Fifty dollars a piece, Max, and twenty five for Beatrice! Are you crazy? Why, in one week, that's -- she shuddered.

We'll need lots of new clothes, said Addie delightedly.

Mama turned to her and blinked. Clothes, she hadn't thought of that. In a place like that, she ejaculated.

If you think I'm going to sit in the children's dining-room, began Beatrice -

We're staying home, bristled mama.

O.K., said papa with a shrug, so much the better for me, I'll go alone. The children burst into protest, all assailing mama at once.

Mama looked flustered. We could go to a farm, better, or a smaller place -

Now mama, stop being such a, such an old stick in the mud, said Addie sharply.

Always spoiling a good idea, muttered Ben.

You see, said papa, even the children know how old fashioned you are. Why don't you snap out of it?

Mama swayed from side to side. For that money we could have rented a bungalow in Brighton and stayed at the beach for three full months!

The beach, said Addie in a lemonade voice.

Gee whiz, said Ben, why didn't you think of it before? The fun I've missed!

Well, demanded papa.

Mama raised her arms with her voice. Where'll we get so much money from? It'll cost maybe a thousand dollars before we're through. Enough to buy a house, have a place of our own. Even a three carat diamond would be a better

investment; you can always sell it if you should ever need the money. But this? Two weeks and nothing, nothing but another place to eat and sleep.

Papa walked about the room, trying to keep his temper. Then he stopped short. Good Lord, if a man were to figure out all the money it cost him to live, he'd go crazy. The money I've earned and spent! What do you think? Addie, Ben, Beatrice, the twenty years we're married! Do you want all the money back again?

Mama fetched a deep sigh. Believe me, I wouldn't mind having it. Everybody had to laugh.

That settled it. And then papa showed mama the check from Mr. Schumann. He waved the children away, saying it was none of their business. Mama's face looked a little brighter.

God should give him a good life, she murmured. He may be a Christian but he's got a wonderful heart. Pity and gratitude mingled in her.

And that's not all, said papa. It's all right, he knows what I'm worth. Some day, not so far off - well, you'll see. A thousand dollars won't seem like two cents. He snapped his fingers carelessly. Mama pursed her lips, glad to hear him say so.

Beatrice had no trouble convincing papa. Mama, of course - Her jaw took a stubborn hold. I don't have to go at all, you know. I can stay right here at home. I've done it before. I can get along fine by myself. Either I go as an equal or you go without me.

Mama let her rave. She would fix things when they got there. Even twenty-five dollars a week for a kid was absurd; she would speak to the manager right away. These fancy hotels with their rates on paper! A word in person, a smile -- they knew the people they could fool. She wasn't so dumb. She set about preparing smartly for the holiday.

But when they got there, doubt and fear closed in on mama and she let papa

handle everything. She was afraid to speak, afraid of doing the wrong thing, afraid of her clothes, afraid of the hotel's size and elegance, afraid of all the strangeness. So she just stood there, trying to look pleasant and keeping the children at her side. Then they went to their rooms, the bellhop saluted and the door was closed. A dollar tip - she was bewildered. She opened the suitcases. Papa laid out his clothes, whistling, and everyone began to choose what to wear for lunch. It was Saturday. They could get an idea of the other people after a trial appearance.

It didn't take long to realize that the other people were no different from themselves. Yiddish mixed with English; there was a free sense of familiarity among them; everyone was anxious to be at ease; everyone knew it was expensive and grand; everyone was glad to feel important. But mama said, careful, don't be too friendly, don't talk too much, nobody has to know how much money we have. Then she set about to match boast for boast, and lie for lie, determined to make an up-to-date impression.

Papa was pleased at mama's success; if rich, sophisticated people found her as much to their liking as poor, domestic people, then he was satisfied. With a man it was different. If he knew how to dress, play cards and drink, he could get along anywhere, with the best of them. Besides, wasn't he a democrat, a liberal Jew, an active business man, and one who believed in the future of the U.S.A.? So what was there to worry about?

Addie was content to sit and look pretty. If a young man wanted to dance or chat or take a short walk with her, all right. If not, she enjoyed being with mama, to watch a card game, to write a letter, to look and listen quietly. Sports didn't interest her. I'm the home-girl type, she said. People found her charming, sweet, a very lovely young lady.

Beatrice frowned. What good are horses and row boats if we can't use them? Who ever heard of a little girl riding on a horse? Mama laughed. Can you

got on, have you got pants, would you know what to do even if you did get on? The horse would throw you off in a minute and run away one-two-three!

Beatrice pouted. How would she ever learn anything being a girl! And the horses looked so nice and gentle. A few of the men went riding every morning, sometimes in the late afternoon too. The horses switched their tails, pawed the ground, turned with the bit, and walked along the lakeside trail, their bodies smooth and sleek beneath their saddles. The thought of sitting so high off the ground, sent a thrill through Beatrice. Gidyap, she would say, faster, faster. And she would race through the trees behind the wind. Rowing, what was hard about that? All you did was move the oars back to front. She showed mama how with her arms.

Mama made a face. Go 'way, you couldn't even lift the oars. And who would save you if the boat turned over in the middle of the lake? I don't let Ben go, do I, and he's a big boy. Can you imagine, a child can't sit still and enjoy herself like everybody else? Look how nice Addie is, good as gold. Just put those foolish ideas out of your head and stay near mama, will you?

Swimming in the children's crib was all she was allowed. It wasn't much fun. No big waves, the water tame and cold, a few splashing babies being taught to kick in the water, some boys playing with an airfilled ball. After a few dips, her lips turned blue; she didn't like the weeds, the taste of the water, the small roped-in area by the shore. And the children's game room was a fake; half a lotto set was missing, there were no toys to be had, there was one skate with a broken strap, some old newspaper comics and cards lay on the floor. The children ran in and out of the room, went sliding across the floor, made a lot of noise. She begged the clerk at the desk for an envelope and piece of stationery; he gave it to her reluctantly when she swore it was for a letter to her teacher which she would show him afterwards. After waiting an hour for Addie to get through with the pen and ink, she sat down and wrote Mrs. De Vries.

The two weeks passed with eating in the dining room three times a day, changing

her clothes just as often because Addie did, taking one nice walk with papa around the lake, and getting a ride on a scooter borrowed by Ben from a boy who had lost all his marbles. Papa bought her an Indian leather book mark as a souvenir.

She was glad when school started again. 5B1 was now on the third floor -- and the teacher was Mrs. De Vries! It didn't matter that Ben was in the 8B graduating class, that Addie was a Sophomore in high school. Life closed around the nucleus that was 5B1. The window ledges were gay with autumn flowers, there were new curtains, new library books, there was the smell of fresh varnish, fresh paint. The blackboards seemed blacker, the writing paper whiter. It was good to be back, to laugh at Annabelle Critch and Miguel Reynosa, the Mutt and Jeff on the class line. Beatrice moved back behind Amy and Lennie. It gave her a new seat in row two, with a new perspective of the room and a fresh awareness of her classmates. How handsome Dick was with his tightly curled hair and narrow eyes, how smart. She caught him looking at her before and after each lesson. Lessons moved quickly.

On Health Day, Mrs. De Vries said she would dismiss each pupil for the rest of the morning as soon as his examination was complete. The eye chart was set up in back of the room, the scale and yardstick in front. Each child was to pass to Mrs. De Vries' desk, show his teeth, nails and head, then walk to the back, listen and repeat what she said, then stand behind a white chalk line and with the help of a yellow slip read the chart with the right eye, then the left eye, then both together, and finally get weighed and measured. After that, the pupil was free to take his lunch box, coat and hat, and tiptoe quietly from the room. Beatrice was delighted she was eighth in line; it would give her more time in the park. She wished Dick was next. He wasn't, he was near the end.

Mrs. De Vries gave her a nice smile. All right, Beatrice, she said, you can run along. Eyes, teeth, height, weight, hearing, everything was in good order. She went out softly and hurried down the stairs.

It was a lovely Fall day, the air crisp and full of sunshine. Not many children were in the park; the playground beckoned. She walked about to see if anyone she know was there. Someone called and came running. It was Goldie, her hair whirling in the breeze, her grey eyes full of pleasure. The two set off for the slides, dropped their books under the stair ladder and climbed swiftly to the top. Soon there were four using the slide with them. A game began, each child racing to keep the steady pace of slide, return and climb, one after the other, aware of heels above one's head, of a head below one's heels. The pace grew swifter, the cries and laughter more shrill. A boy joined them. All together, he called, hook on, one behind the other! Come on, I'll show you! He clutched the sides of the grooved slide, lowered himself slowly, waited till all six girls had hooked themselves behind him, then let go. It became a hilarious game, to see how many could toboggan down together. More and more children came running until there was no room left for sliding. Some one suggested bellywopping, lying down, standing and running. One after another, they climbed to the top, took a deep breath and ran down.

Beatrice could hardly wait for Dick to show up, wishing he could see her run down the slide. And then, without warning, the sky slipped. Ground hurtled up, there was a scream, a sharp jar. She looked up, confused by all the faces gathered around her. I'm all right, she said queerly. She tried to get up and felt dizzy. It seemed everyone in the park had arrived to look at her. For a minute she blinked dumbly, wondering how they could have collected there so soon. Then she saw Goldie's frightened face, heard her close voice. Someone yelled, here comes a policeman, followed by, here she is, over here!

Let's get our books, Goldie, let's go home, Beatrice said. No one tried to stop them. They walked away, Beatrice repeating, please don't talk to me yet, please don't talk, I just want to get home. But Goldie who insisted on carrying both sets of books and wanted to take her arm couldn't stop.

As soon as they left the park, Beatrice turned, her face tense, her voice trembling. If you really want to be my friend, please don't say another word, please! If you do, I'll leave you. I don't want to cry.

The explanation worried Goldie more than the silence. Does it hurt, she whispered. Beatrice shook her head and walked on, her feet directing her almost blindly towards home. Another street, another crossing, under the elevated train, eight more blocks, seven, the high terrace of the hospital, the long hill up. She kept on and on, her mind blank of everything but home. For a moment, Goldie hesitated as she passed her own house, then saw a woman wheeling a baby carriage and called, tell my mother I'll be right back!

Tell my mother, tell my mother -- the words throbbed against her pain, but still she didn't stop, didn't slow her steps, not until she saw the familiar stoop, the tall open doorway -- and then she became afraid. She went in and leaned against the wall and there her tears splashed. She gasped, tell my mother, tell my mother, but couldn't finish. Anxiety fought with pain. What would she tell mama, what would mama say?

And then mama was leading her up the stairs, hushing her cries, speaking to Goldie. And now the pain bit into her left arm, only there, but oh so sharp, excruciating! Mama had to cut the sleeve out of her dress, and she cried unceasingly. There was nothing to prevent her, not the sudden crowd, not the policeman, not Goldie, not the long walk home, not the fear of mama's fear, nothing. There was just pain left, pain that made her left arm a dangling, burning stick. It was impossible to stop crying, impossible to lie down; she sat on the edge of the bed, her nightgown partly on, partly off, crying, until Dr. Rausch came and assured her it would go on hurting until he fixed it. And he was so cheery, so sympathetic, his voice and manner so comforting and sure, that the crying began to ebb. The fire dwindled to a single point above her elbow, the woodenness went

out of her fingers, and in half an hour she was propped against a cool soft pillow, happy to let her arm rest in a sure, tight sling. She could even tell the doctor how it had happened, not minding mama's worried exclamations at all. He laughed and shook his head, saying she was a spunky kid all right, then told her to be a good girl, a brave girl, a smart girl, because being cranky wouldn't help the bones heal any faster and mama had enough to worry about without being given a lot of extra trouble. A week, two, and you'll be as good as new again, eh? She pressed his hand to her cheek, promising.

It wasn't easy. The slightest move and the pain shot through her arm again. Sleeping was a series of startled groans interrupting night and mama's rest. Papa had moved into the children's bedroom with Ben, Addie was assigned to the cot; mama lay next to Beatrice, consoling, helping. Walking was no easier. Her whole body seemed suspended from her arm sling, weighing it down, forcing it out of position. She had to go to the hospital, to have an X Ray taken, to have a plaster cast made for her arm. Things she had taken for granted all her life suddenly loomed up as gigantic problems - eating, washing, dressing. Though she learned to make good use of her handicap, too.

Sure, take advantage of me, she would say grimly, hit a fellow when he's down.

Birdie eyed her suspiciously, not sure whether it was really as bad as it looked. Does it hurt all the time, she asked, can't you even move it? And Beatrice would go into careful details about what having a broken arm meant.

When Ben lost patience with her over stealing his latest copy of Frank Merriwell, she held out the stiff arm support and said, all right, hit me, go on, hit me!

But at last the bandages came off and the plaster was removed and her arm was free once more. She winced when the doctor tested it. He assured her it didn't hurt a bit and went on to tell her about another little girl whose arm had not healed

and how he had to break it again and make a new cast for it. She agreed that her arm was completely cured.

Not long after that, she began to move her seat forward in the movie. Addie and Ben said it was too near and let her sit by herself. She didn't like having the screen on top of her head, but it was the only way she could make out the words without squinting and see the faces of the actors. Her eyes began to bother her at school, too. Things written on the blackboard seemed faint and blurred; she had to stare and press her fingers over her eyeballs to make them out. It slowed her work a lot. Even Mrs. De Vries noticed that she didn't finish first any more and made some teasing remark about it. Beatrice said it was her eyes.

Mrs. De Vries wagged her finger. Now Beatrice, I examined your eyes only a month ago and you had 20-20, which is perfect vision. I'm afraid you're becoming a little dreamer. They say people in love act like that - you know, moonstruck, stargazers.

The class thought it a good joke but more than one face grew red as heads nodded at this one and that one. Beatrice kept quiet, her eyes fixed on her desk; Dick's face had become vague also, though he sat only two rows away.

In the mirrow, she could find nothing wrong with her eyes. When she read a book or a newspaper, she could find no trouble in seeing the smallest type. So it must be all in her imagination. Or love. But she did ask mama why people wore glasses.

Because they can't see, silly, mama retorted and then with a queer turn of her head said, why, are you thinking of wearing glasses now? Beatrice didn't answer. Mama snorted. Don't worry, Addie told me how you go up front in the movies suddenly. The next thing you'll be telling me you need glasses. What's the matter, is it becoming stylish? Annie and Tillie wear glasses, so Beatrice

must look like a monkey, too? But it wouldn't surprise me a bit, the way you take your eyes out every night. You think I don't know? Always reading, getting dark rings like a woman of forty. Glasses! No one in our whole family ever had to wear glasses, not even Grandma, who's an old lady - she reads, writes, sews, everything - so don't talk to me about glasses, you hear?

Beatrice went off grumpily. As if she wanted to wear glasses! Four eyes, goggle face, ugh! She'd die if she had to wear them, the way they stuck on your nose, made your ears come out, hid your eyes behind two thick circles. Why mama should get so excited - the idea, glasses! But it worried her all the same.

When the cold days arrived, Mrs. De Vries reminded Beatrice she might be late because of the ferry, and told her to take charge and carry on as usual. So when she didn't show up one Monday morning towards the end of November, Beatrice announced herself teacher. There were a few protests. The office monitor insisted on reporting to the principal. A few took sides, arguing that Beatrice had been told to take teacher's place by teacher herself. Finally the room came to order as Beatrice firmly took her seat behind Mrs. De Vries' desk, opened the top drawer with a key and began to call the role from the familiar class book. She ignored the snickers, the loud here's, and continued the morning routines. She omitted nothing: the hygiene inspection, the check on text book covers and homework, the correction of examples, the passing of yellow arithmetic paper for the first lesson... Then the door opened and Mr. Lansing looked in. Since Beatrice was explaining the day's work and didn't see him, he closed the door softly, made a motion with his hand to the class and remained standing without saying a word. When Beatrice finished explaining the last problem, she wrote the new homework lesson on the board, and gave them some examples to do. Then she saw Mr. Lansing. He ignored her and walked up the aisles to see the children's work. After a while he signalled for attention.

I was going to call in a substitute to take Mrs. De Vries' place today but I see you have one already. A very good one, I must say. So if it's all the same

to you children, I think I'll leave her in charge. The class eyed him solemnly. Mrs. De Vries may be out a few days, he said, and cleared his throat. There were a few startled murmurs. Yes, it's rather serious. I've had Mrs. De Vries with me some odd ten years and this is the first time she admits being too ill to come to school. So she must be sick. And she's a wonderful teacher, isn't she? You love her, don't you? And want her to get well quickly? Well, the best medicine you can give her is the news that you're cooperating and working hard. What do you say, will she find you ready when she comes back or will she have to teach twice as much to make up the missing lessons? Good. Now remember, I don't want to have to come in to see that you're behaving yourselves as you should. Every child knows what to do and when to do it. If there are any questions, I think Beatrice can answer them; if not, she can ask Mrs. Florence to help. Then we understand each other? I expect Beatrice to be a good teacher and I expect the rest of you to treat her as though she were. Is that clear? He looked around the room at each child's sober face, nodded his head and left.

All went well for a few lessons, with the usual leaders taking part in their own best subjects, Eva in Geography, Lester in History, Hattie in Spelling, Dick in Reading - Beatrice sat in the teacher's high chair by the window, keeping the lessons moving according to the clock. Occasionally she put her finger to her lips to caution whisperers, or pointed to the book on a wool gatherer's desk. But as the morning wore on, signs of restlessness broke out. She began to scold, to threaten punishment. Sulky expressions appeared, there were mutterings: who was she to give double homework, to make anybody stay in after school, to put marks in Mrs. De Vries' little yellow book? She grew stubborn; she had a job to do and she was going to do it right. She kept the class in line at the door until there was complete silence and perfect order; dismissal was five minutes after the bell. In the yard, after lunch, 5B1 was the first class to line-up. Miss Hunter stopped

by to talk to Beatrice, her eye sharp on every child. She had arranged for 5B1 to double with her 6A class in drawing, music, assembly - she went on, outlining the schedule. Beatrice listened, nodded; she had always been somewhat afraid of Miss Hunter - she was so tall, had a deep voice, a mannish step, seemed so stern - now she felt a new bond between them. Miss Hunter was strict because she demanded respect. No one laughed at Miss Hunter; she was respected. Respect, that was what Beatrice wanted, and the children would find-out she was a good teacher, too.

She hurried home from school an hour late; she had sent a written message to Ben, explaining that Mrs. De Vries was absent and she was taking the teacher's place. But mama would worry anyway. For once, mama wasn't home and neither Ben or Addie seemed at all concerned about her. She found them stupid and dull about the extraordinary events of the day. Ben went off to play and Addie sat down to practice the piano, as though nothing had happened. Beatrice set to work immediately to prepare her next day's lessons. She would have to keep ahead of the others. Most of the children had already finished their 5B text books. She would surprise them. She borrowed Ben's books: she would teach them 6B arithmetic, grammer, spelling, composition, geography and history. But it was so puzzling that she had to ask Addie's help. It was Addie's moment of triumph; at last she could prove the big difference between being a 5B child and a young lady in high school. Beatrice submitted humbly. The important thing was to learn. She took quickly to decimals, percents and interest. The work fascinated her, like a new game. By the time Ben came in, she was ready for 6B grammar.

Gaez, he said, can you beat that, my kid sister - And you gonna keep on till your teacher comes back? Why, they might even give you a salary!

Beatrice stared at him - she hadn't thought about that. What would papa say? Her throat went dry and she could hardly swallow. Oh Ben, she whispered, please help me every day. I'll do anything you ask to help you, too.

Aa, forget it, he said, rumpling her hair, come on, let's get going. I'll do my homework and you can watch and ask questions.

Papa took the news very seriously. It was a great honor. She would have to work hard to deserve it. He went over all of the next day's lessons with her, coaching her carefully, making sure she knew every step of the way. Each lesson was put on a separate sheet of paper, each example with its answer, each word with its sentence, each sentence diagrammed and parsed, each geography and history topic neatly outlined. Then he made Ben listen to her read a story in his reader to be sure she knew the pronunciation and meaning of the hard words. When she finished, papa nodded his head, satisfied.

I'm proud of you, baby, he said. You've got a chance to make something of yourself, remember! He held up an index finger, wagged his head solemnly and accepted her fervent goodnight kiss.

Mama sat by, looking worried. Maybe it's too much for the child, she said. After all, you can only put so much into a head at one time.

Papa made a noise in his throat. Think she's got your head? Always worrying about somebody getting a brain hemmorrhage from too much thinking. Old wives' superstitions, that's what!

Never mind, said mama quietly, I could tell you lots of stories -

Beatrice could hardly sleep, hardly wait. She went up to the classroom early to get the arithmetic problems on the board. The janitor got her a kindergarten stool to stand on so that she could reach the top of the board. If only Mrs. De Wries would stay home for a few days! In composition, she would have the children write a letter to Mrs. De Vries, telling her to get well quickly and hurry back. When the first bell rang, she raced downstairs to face the line.

The children took to the new lessons eagerly, but after a while, the slow ones started to complain. It was too hard - they weren't supposed to learn percents and decimals - why didn't she use their own books - what did they care about SB work - They grumbled and muttered among themselves, accused Beatrice of being a show-off,

threatened to tell their parents -

When it came to Friday's tests and end of the month report cards, a general howl went up. She had no right to put marks in Mrs. De Vries' book! They wouldn't take their papers home to be signed! Report cards, what did she know about giving them report cards? She was just a pupil in the class, no better than anybody else! They dared her to send for Mr. Lansing, to see what he would say! The nerve of her! They wouldn't come back to school, they would be absent till Mrs. De Vries came back!

She paid no attention to them, she went ahead anyhow. She made out truant slips for absences, punished lateness, gave extra homework to bad children, entered marks in the class record book, and during the second week of being teacher, took home the report cards and filled them in.

Mrs. Critch marched right into the room, bawled her out in front of the class, then hustled Annabelle to the office. Beatrice declared a study period and waited, trembling. Soon, loud voices sounded outside the door. Mrs. Critch was arguing, Mr. Lansing was roaring. The class sat frozen.

You take your girl out of school and I'll report you to the Board of Education and the police! I'm the principal of this school, not you!

Mrs. Critch glared furiously at Beatrice and gave Annabelle a push. Annabelle walked to her seat without looking at anyone. Mr. Lansing took a vote for and against Beatrice. She won by a unanimous show of hands.

She's a credit to the school, that little girl, he shouted. Ten years old and doing the job of a college graduate. And doing it well, too! How many children do you think there are in the whole New York City school system could handle a class for more than two days and keep them busy, quiet? You ought to feel proud of having Annabelle in her class! And that goes for the rest of you children. If anybody here isn't satisfied, you send your parents to see me, understand? We don't have people breaking into classrooms without a pass from the office! Beatrice is working hard and I won't have visitors pestering her. I may not be in this room every hour of every day, but don't think I don't know what's going on because I do!

It was a victory for Beatrice but it left her joyless and fatigued. She began to wish Mrs. De Vries would come back right away. It was no fun being teacher with all the children acting mad or jealous. Even her best friends didn't treat her the same any more, not even during lunch hour in the yard when she joined them as a regular pupil in the school. One day she ate upstairs alone, but afterwards she felt ashamed. She could picture them saying, why don't you eat in the teacher's room since you're so smart? Twice, she had a good cry by herself. It was so unfair - she was only trying to do her best, to do what she thought was right! How else could she teach them if she wasn't strict? She couldn't let them play and do nothing all day! If she was strict, it was only because a lot of the children wanted to sit back and fool around all the time! Why should they have a holiday because Mrs. De Vries was sick?

Papa encouraged her, Ben and Addie helped her, mama kissed her. In the assembly, Mr. Lansing talked about unknown heroes who never got gold medals or great awards, but whose deeds shone in the hearts of men just the same, and he told about a brave little girl who had taken charge of her class during her teacher's illness, and everybody turned to look at Beatrice and soon the whole assembly was clapping and Miss Hunter was motioning Beatrice to stand up, and oh how embarrassed she felt, how her heart pounded! At last something had happened to make her forget she was just a little nobody, just the baby of the family...

Finally, Mrs. De Vries came back and it was a relief to be able to sit with the rest of the pupils on the other side of the teacher's desk once more. Mrs. De Vries looked wonderful, a little fatter and full of laughter. She couldn't get over the surprise of finding the class so far ahead in grammar and arithmetic.

My goodness, she declared, there won't be any teaching you children when you do get to 8B!

Of course there was a big welcome-back for her. The teachers sent a basket of flowers to the room and the children got all dressed up and the best artists drew welcome signs on the blackboards and it was all so lovely that Mrs. De Vries said it

was just like Christmas and she hoped the children wouldn't want another party on top of this one.

After that, time went very fast. Snow came, winds blew, Christmas slipped into the old year, January hurtled into the new one and everything had a new look. It was hard to believe that Ben was in high school with Addie, hard to remember how mama had looked before she had gotten so fat, hard to realize that short legs which had swung freely beneath the kitchen table now rested securely on the floor. Papa began to talk of big business and they seemed to be getting rich, very rich. Money was going into everybody's bank account each week. He was thinking of buying a car, he said. Mama said why not a house for their old age. Addie said why not a new neighborhood where she could make new friends and have big parties and servants. No, a car, said Ben, he could get a driving license easy, tell the police he was sixteen. Instead, they stayed at 350 Carlton Avenue, the bank accounts grew, mama received fifty dollars a week for house and spending money, papa bought jewelry and clothes and liquor, there were late card games and supper parties, they went to big ball-room affairs, they were becoming a successful-Jewish-American-democratic-middleclass-city family. They were very pleased and satisfied.

Let the neighbors talk all they like, said mama, they're just jealous. And she told Beatrice a story to prove her point. Once there was a merchant who had a store. He had two assistants. One got two dollars a week and the other got ten dollars a week. Of course the first was always complaining, he worked just as many days and hours as the second man, his bread and shoes cost him just as much, so why should he get less? It was a big store, mama said, the kind they had in small European villages in those days, a store where they sold everything - food, clothing, hardware, furniture, whatever anyone could think of buying. Well, business went on like that for a long time, with one salesman making two and the other making ten dollars a week. At last the poor one decided to bring his complaint before the merchant and see what he could do. The merchant listened very nicely, quietly, like a real gentleman, and then he said, all right, just a minute, there's a wagon outside with some important cus-

tomers, go see what they want. So the fellow hurried outside and soon was back. They want to give us a big order, he said excitedly. Yes, said the merchant, that's fine, what do they want? The fellow rushed off to find out. They want chairs, beds, tables, dresses, coats, suits, hay for the horses, nails, tools, everything, he exclaimed breathlessly. Well, said the merchant, that's fine, how many chairs do they want? The salesman practically fell all over himself going and coming. Eight, he shouted gleefully. So, said the merchant, at what price? Again the fellow ran off. Well, said mama, he kept running back and forth like that for more than an hour, maybe a hundred times, while the merchant just sat at his counter quietly, taking notes. When the order was finished, the merchant called the second salesman who had been busy in back of the store all this time, and said, there's a wagon outside with some important customers, go see what they want. Naturally, the first fellow was very much surprised at this, why should the merchant send the other fellow out to repeat the order? But about fifteen minutes later, the second fellow came back with a written list. Here, he said to the merchant, this is what they want. And on the list was written everything: what, how many, how much, what kind, the whole order. The merchant looked it over and then stood up. Now do you see why I pay you only two dollars a week and him ten dollars a week? There's your answer. So, said mama, if we have more than other people, can we help it? Let the whole world talk, they're just jealous.

Things became different at home. Mama and papa didn't have so many fights as before. Mama said papa was getting some sense into his head at last. He still went downtown on dates with the boys, but he no longer came back drunk. And now that she played poker, she sometimes joined him downtown for Ladies' Night. Of course the taxi-ing bothered her but when papa proved with paper and pencil that no amount of taxi fares equalled the cost of owning and running a private car, she had to give in.

Yes, things were becoming quite different. Mama was getting modern. She went to the beauty parlor once a week, she spent money on all kinds of makeup and hair dyes, she took to using a can opener, she sent all the laundry out, she gave up sew-

ing and bought everything at the stores, she got a vacuum cleaner for the rugs and even began to read the daily newspaper.

In fact, I'm taking life easy, she told the neighbors who were also going modern. They had a good laugh together.

To think we could be so stupid, Mrs. Singer said, greenhorns, what do you think!

Getting down on my knees to scrub floors every day, cooking from sunup to sundown to feed our bellies three times a day, taking my eyes out on the sewing machine, banging carpets on the roof till I ached all over - Mrs. Goodman wiped her eyes goodnaturedly, summing up the years.

And me, said Mrs. Weaver, breaking my back over a week's wash in the bathtub, then ironing till three in the morning.

They looked back over their mistakes, shook their heads, sighed, laughed. Such dopes. Just a bunch of dumb foreigners. Going to so much trouble for nothing. Letting their teeth spoil, making their fingernails and hands rough, getting old and worn out years before their time. Ah, America, America! What a waste of opportunities, when they could have taken life easy and enjoyed it.

What did we know? We thought it was a blessing to have running water, steam heat, lights, stores - Remember the old country, how it was there - And here modern machines, new inventions, wonderful drug stores, free schools, parks, ice delivered and garbage collected, movies, beauty parlors, poker games, what a country!

Beatrice looked at mama wonderingly. Was it mama's gold teeth and bridge work, or her getting so fat and wearing size 44, or what? Because mama was changing, too. Mama playing cards all the time, so intent on the game, the strident laugh she had developed... Mama hurrying in the kitchen, losing her patience over the least thing, only half listening to what was being said... Beatrice frowned. The sewing machine sat in a corner, its hum shut up. How it had buzzed over sheets,

dresses, shirts, taking in a seam, letting out a hem - mama cutting and snipping, fitting paper patterns, marking the outlines with chalk; mama singing, chatting, pinning, basting, letting the remnants fall for doll costumes. So many happy hours gone. Intimate, precious hours, having mama all to oneself. Mama warm and perspiring, busy at the stove, cleaning the windows, mending socks and pants. Mama alone in the kitchen at night, waiting, dreaming. Always her mama somehow, a sad, glad, worrying, kindly mama whom only she, Beatrice, really understood, feeling they had shared secrets that no one else could, secrets of the heart, secrets hidden behind the eyes... That mama, was she gone forever?

No, there was still Friday. Came Friday, mama set everything aside. On that day she linked herself to all that had been before modernisms and America and inventions and poker. On that day, she was home again, in the home of her childhood, traditions and upbringing. Friday was holy, not to be merged with other days, not to be forgotten. It was the eve of sabbath. Nothing could change that. Friday meant a clean sweeping away of the old week and a fresh beginning of the new one. It took the whole day to accomplish that, from dawn to sunset. On Friday, mama cleaned. Every room in the house, every corner, wall and floor, every window - dusted, washed. Every piece of silver scoured and brightened. Every piece of glass and cutglass bathed. Curtains were aired, mattresses turned over, springs sprayed, cushions beaten, bed linens changed, closets and shelves rearranged, furniture waxed, doilies and scarfs replaced, plumbing and light fixtures polished. Besides marketing and cooking for the three day weekend, besides home baked breads and cakes and cookies. Came sundown, how proud mama was to see her house clean, her pots full, her breads cool. Then she hurried into her bath, let her fatigue soak away, and relaxed. Her clothes were laid out, she had a fresh apron for serving, the candles were waiting on the table, timed to the first shadows of evening dusk. Then Beatrice knew mama again, sweet smelling, simply dressed, a white cover on her head, her hands over her face, her lips murmuring the sabbath prayer by candlelight.

And the others, papa and Addie and Ben, had they changed? It was hard to say about papa, he had always seemed different. Perhaps papa had changed least. He was still Mr. Max Berger, a man who lived more of his life outside the family than within it. His bald spot might have grown bigger, the fringe around it grayer, but for the most part he was still the prosperous looking, big-bellied business man with a flare for silk shirts and Ed Pinaud lotions. And he still had a curl in his little finger. There was something about that which caught the eye and held it, as though in the gesture was the pose. If before he'd been a show-off without excuse, now he was a show-off with one, that was really all. Being rich came natural to papa, he had prepared for it all his life.

Addie, a young lady in the sixth term of high school, her hair up, wearing silk stockings and high heels, using make up. Addie, almost seventeen, almost at the marriageable age. Unbelievable, how it had happened. Only yesterday, it seemed, that other Addie, Addie in pigtails, with a sly narrow smile, someone given to nervous crying spells, who fought with teeth and nails and pinches and sharp feet and elbows, a big sister who could be mean and spiteful, so hard to get along with or close to - but still Addie, the Addie who was as much a part of every day as eating, as fixed and familiar as a habit. And yet, there was the proof, Addie as she was Now. A different Addie because a different Now. Addie interested in new things, talking about business courses and being a secretary in an office, about friends and appointments, an Addie who went off by herself for a whole day or was invited out to an evening party.

And Ben, too, changing, though not so fast, not too much. A Ben who still sucked his tie, got good and mad or laughed out loud, played ball on the lots, came in hungry and thirsty. But taller now, heavier, his face bigger and somehow more serious, as though he, too, were beginning to think of new things.

Everything changing because of a changing series of Nows, todays slipping into yesterdays, becoming last week, a month ago, the year before. How could time be something different outside the brain than all the time inside it? When all you had to do

was remember and time came back... Didn't the time belong to you if you could do that? And weren't the mama, papa, Addie and Ben she had always known real, here, since they had been for as long as she could remember? She looked at her arms, legs, hands, feet, the curve of her cheeks, her nose and mouth and eyes. Ten years old, going on eleven, time said, meaning they were not the same as they had been when she was three, six, eight... Pooh, she recognized them all! Of course they were the same, just a little bigger, that's all. Look at her fingers, her nails, each a thing in itself, having a self, each with its own special figure, the nails like faces - and yet each one a part of her, Beatrice, from time beginning to time end. Why, it was crazy to believe that time really changed anything or anyone. Wasn't her voice the same one she had always heard? Not only inside when it made no sound, but the one in her ears when it did? And her eyes, the way they looked, saw, noticed things, showed what she was thinking or feeling. How could people fool themselves? Their eyes did not lie. People themselves might, but not their eyes. Addie pretending she didn't understand, Ben looking surprised when she said, you didn't used to be like that, think like that, talk like that, act like that - as though she had been spying on them. She, knowing all the time what they were really like, knowing that they knew, too, secretly, inside. Of course she was right! Why should they be different from her? And she knew, about herself, so why shouldn't they? It was all so silly, this making believe one changed, had changed, was changing... Because even time didn't, not really. Now was this minute and everything in it all over the world for everybody, and when it passed and a new minute came, only the word Now changed, not the minute before or the minute after - how could they change? Whatever each minute was, it would always be; no one could call it back and make it over - there it was, one and the same thing, forever fixed and for all time! And it was so easy to prove that. All you had to do was remember and Now could be whatever minute Now had ever been for you: when you went to the hospital, when the burglar disappeared down the fire escape, when you ran away to school, when anything at all. Like singing all the songs you ever learned. Weren't they the same songs with the same tunes and same words? Well then? Or reciting the multiplication table. Or the alphabet. They never changed.

She grew excited over the discovery. Not that she hadn't known about time for a long, long time, but it was nice being sure sometimes, especially when you got worried that everything and everyone was changing, becoming different.

But in spite of her certainty, the changes continued. Not only at home, but at school. P.S. 40 was being reorganized into a six year school. The Board of Education had arranged it. Because junior high schools were coming into the city's school program. To help children make the transition from grammar school to high school, Mr. Lansing said.

It's really better that way, he repeated, but papa could tell Mr. Lansing wasn't happy about it either. There would be no more graduations at P.S. 40.

Beatrice wept. No, she didn't want to skip again! It didn't help a bit that the whole class was being moved up another grade with Mrs. De Vries. It meant leaving P.S. 40 that much sooner!

I'd rather be left back, I'd rather, she sobbed. If we hadn't been skipped twice, I'd have an extra year. They didn't skip Addie and Ben, they got to stay till they were fourteen! Then why did they skip me, I'm only ten?

But you'll be eleven comes summer, please God, aren't you proud to be in the seventh grade in a junior high school when you're only eleven? But mama was just saying that, she didn't mean it, because she didn't like the idea of Beatrice having to go so far to school. It meant trolleys and carfare and going back and forth by herself. She didn't like the change at all. She went to see for herself where the new school was, in what kind of neighborhood, how far from home. She returned somewhat appeased; the trolley car stopped right in front of the school and would bring Beatrice back right to the bottom of the hill; there would be no more long walks, no more worries about street crossings. Still - mama sighed, trying to anticipate what might happen when Beatrice rode to school instead.

The last term - it was like the end of the world, each day bringing the end one day sooner. Everything concentrated that spring on the imminent change. Nothing seemed the same, nothing. For Beatrice, every moment had a new preciousness, every

hour became a condensed day. Days had to count for weeks, weeks for months. She stretched time with every ounce of will, cramming it with memorized consciousness, squeezing it of every drop of meaning. Time had never been more important. To make it last, to keep it - but it wouldn't stop, wouldn't stand still, wouldn't be kept back. The clock ticked, the morning became the afternoon, then night, another calendar page was ripped off, Monday moved to Friday, the weekends wiped the blackboards clean, and then Mrs. De Vries was back, writing a new month, a new date. They were finishing the 6B work.

Too bad, said Addie, you won't get a Palmer Certificate now. Palmer Certificates were for graduates who had completed eight years of the penmanship course.

Beatrice pushed Addie away, pushed away rules. In the morning she went to see Mr. Lansing. If I work hard, if I hand in the whole series of lessons in my most beautiful handwriting, can I get a Palmer Certificate? Oh please, Mr. Lansing, I know I can, I must!

But why don't you wait and get one in junior high school, that would be much nicer, he said.

No, no, I want it from P.S. 40, signed by you and Mrs. De Vries! And she was so earnest that at last he agreed and Beatrice took home the paper and the Palmer course. She forgot everything else. Writing took the place of friends, games, movies, books. She wrote and wrote, the drills, the letters, the words. Out of fifteen sheets, she would select the best, then go on. Page after page of perfection till the course was completed. Then waiting, while Mrs. De Vries checked through the series. Waiting, till the sheaf was sent off. Waiting to hear.

A plus, her report card. What was that? Since she couldn't stop time, what was she if not a failure? She took to coming early, to eating lunch in the classroom, no longer caring what her classmates thought, to staying in after school. Always finding an excuse to rearrange the cupboards, to dust the books, to clean out the desk drawers - Mrs. De Vries let her, sensing her need. Sometimes she lifted Beatrice's chin in the palm of her hand and said, you're a funny little thing,

or else, you're a strange child. And Beatrice would seize her hand and place an ardent kiss there, the words choking her throat, the unspoken I love you, Mrs. De Vries, and hurry away before she became a slobbering fool.

The whole spring was school troubles. Mama thought she would go crazy. First Beatrice, then Ben, then Addie. I wish you were all back in kindergarten, she would say, unable to cope with their problems.

Ben was forever coming in late, dirty from game practice. Now it was soccer, a game that sounded to mama like prize fighting, except that they used a ball. Ben showed her how, dancing and dodging around her. And his grades were poor, poor for Ben, because papa expected him to continue at the head of his class.

What class, scowled Ben. Geez, I got five of them, pa - Latin, English, Algebra, Ancient History and Biology. That's a lot of classes for one guy!

But papa wouldn't take that for an answer, though mama screamed when he started after Ben with the strap and rolling pin again. My God, Max, he's a man now, you can't do that! Run, Ben, lock the bathroom! Stop, Max, where are you going?

And papa marched straight to the high school then and there to find out what Ben's classes and marks were all about, because he wasn't bringing up any bums and good for nothing loafers who couldn't appreciate an education.

Finally, Ben made an A in Latin, but he hid from papa for two whole days because he only got B's in the other subjects, and mama wanted him to stay over at a friend's house till she could explain it and bring peace back inside the house.

Addie's case was even worse. She didn't want to finish high school. The three years were enough. And it wasn't because of marks either. It was her French teacher. I'll kill myself, Addie shrieked, her eyes trembling, her lips pale and taut. She's making a wreck out of me! And not only me! Everyone hates her! I can't eat or sleep on account of that woman. I tell you, I won't go back!

But a year, mama pleaded, afraid of what papa might do. But of course he couldn't hit Addie, he never had. They had never seen Addie more upset.

Like a sick, skinny chicken, he muttered.

Mama wrung her hands. So she won't know everything, so what? Does a girl have to be as learned as a man? What for? She'll get married, she'll have children, what does she need so much school for? Let that Frenchwoman go to hell, did you ever! Making a pupil sick like this, is that why we send our children to school, to get sick? With Ben, it's different, he's a man, he has to go to college, to be somebody. But Addie?

Addie quit. She wouldn't go back. Lots of the girls were transferring to business school. She knew a few who were already working in offices. And Addie pointed out how much she would like that, earning her own money and eating lunch in resteurants and being a young lady instead of a sniffling high school kid.

Papa shook his head. One more year. One more year, is that so much to finish high school?

I'll be dead in another year, yelled Addie, almost purple in the face.

Mama spat in the air and the next day gave Addie the money to register for a secretarial course in the business school. And even when the French teacher committed suicide by jumping off the roof of the high school building a week later, the decision stood.

Beatrice was disgusted. A girl's education, enough to look pretty, dress nicely, play the piano and win herself a rich husband - not for her, thank you! Why should boys have all the brains? Why couldn't a girl be somebody, too? A business job in an office, huh! Sure, let the boys go to college and become doctors, lawyers, teachers, bankers, big shot professionals, that's fine! Then what about Mrs. De Vries? What about the woman judge in all the papers? Go on, she told mama, there are lots of women smart as men, smarter maybe.

So all right, darling, beamed mama, you'll be the first woman president in the United States.

Beatrice gave up, it was hopeless. And when she thought it out, she had her answer. Of course a woman could be president, but that didn't mean that <u>she</u> wanted to be president . All she was saying was that girls had just as much right to go to

college as boys. None of this business secretary business for her. It just showed how dumb Addie was, quitting the last year of high school. It was a rotten shame, that's what. Addie accused her of being jealous and they had a vicious fight.

Jealous of what, I'd like to know? Cause you're too dumb to finish school? I don't see Anna Weaver quitting. Or any of the smart girls on this block. Only stupid Pearlie Linder, who couldn't even finish the second year. You're just an old copy cat.

Anna Weaver - that's a joke. Compare her to me? She'll never get married! What boy would look twice? Like Edith and Margaret, her old maid sisters. You'll be telling me next to look at four-eyed Hilda who plays the piano all day long!

What's wrong with that, shouted Beatrice, Hilda may become famous!

Let her, shrugged Addie, who cares? I'll have a desk of my own and all the salesmen will bring me presents and I'll eat at the best restaurants and meet people and save a lot of money and buy all the clothes I want - Oh, I'll have a wonderful time!

When Beatrice repeated what Addie said, mimicking her voice and gestures, papa got mad all over again. What's the matter, don't I give you enough spending money and buy you all the clothes you want? God damn it, I'll double your allowance and buy you a store, if that's what you're after!

Addie threw her arms around him. Now papa, you know I love you. You're the best papa in the world. Since when did I say you would stop my allowance when I started to work? Why, I expect to save every penny I earn, I was only fooling about buying my own lunches and clothes. What's the sense being the daughter of a rich, successful business man, if I have to spend my hard earned money?

Papa's humor came back. Hard earned money, that's a good one. I can just see you dragging home the pay envelope every Saturday.

Don't worry, said Addie, I don't intend to grab the first job offered me. I'm going to be mighty choosey, I can afford to be! It'll have to be a beautiful office where I can be treated like a lady by a handsome, generous boss - like you!

Handsome, oh sure, said papa, posing handsomely, but my kind don't grow on trees, you'll find.

Don't I know it, said Addie and kissed his bald spot lovingly. Then, as she frumped past Beatrice, she hissed, troublemaker!

The Palmer Certificate came through and for days Beatrice went around in a kind of glory. Oh, it was sweet, sweet, rubbing it in.

So what, demanded Addie irritably, you'd think you were the only one who ever got it.

But you had to wait till you were in 8B, reminded Beatrice, not to be cheated.

That's because P.S. 40 was an 8B school in my time. Now that's it's a 6B school, the kids will get it sooner.

Kids, what kids, hollered Beatrice, I'm the only kid in 6B who got it, no one else!

Oh well, maybe so, said Addie, using mama's buffer on her nail polish, since yours is the first 6B class to leave. But remember, you had the advantage of watching me and Ben work on all those exercises.

Oh sure, I don't get any credit. You make me sick!

Credit? Addie blew on on her nails. What's it to me? Silly old kid stuff, handwriting. In the business world, everything is typed anyway, and who cares what kind of handwriting you have?

So Beatrice created another scene for papa's benefit that night, proving that Addie was a mean, skinny wretch who couldn't praise anybody for anything. Papa silenced Addie with a stern look and told Beatrice it was all right, he knew her worth, and then gave her a bright shining coin for her bank account.

A ten dollar gold piece, holy smoke, ejaculated Ben, I don't remember us getting anything for our Palmer Certificates, but Ben wasn't a bit jealous because he thought Beatrice deserved it, and he clucked her under the chin in a big brother way that made Addie seem smaller than a worm.

Mama gave Addie a confidential look as much as to say, oh well, you have to please the baby someway, but papa caught the look and said, never mind, we'll have

one smart woman in this family anyway.

Attaboy, agreed Ben.

Beatrice set her jaw. High school, college and university, I don't intend to quit till there's nothing left.

Nothing left is right, tittered Addie.

What for, to get a brain hemmorrhage, God forbid, said mama.

Oh ma, don't copy Addie, I'm not a half wit, my brain is all right, grumbled Beatrice.

That's all right, added papa, that kid's going places, she takes after me. There was a roar of laughter. O.K., laugh, you'll see.

He who laughs last laughs best, retorted Beatrice. For she knew just what papa meant. If papa had had a chance, he'd have had the best and highest education. As it was, he was smarter than most people even if he was only a business man.

Suits me, said Ben, only I wish you'd hurry up and catch up to me so I could let you do my studies, then I'd have more time for sports.

Papa gave him a dirty look. Sports, a lot of good they're doing you. If you're not careful, Beatrice will not only catch up, but leave you far behind.

Even Beatrice had to laugh at that; Ben was still two and a half years ahead. Still, he had been three and a half ahead at the start. She blushed, not daring to think what might happen after she left P.S. 40 because no other school was so strict, and then her heart grew cold, remembering she was going to junior high next Fall.

And then it happened, the thing that made the six years difference between her and Addie vanish. It happened on her way home from school, while she was running down the long hill, her school bag thumping behind her as she raced Goldie to the bottom where the trolley car tracks and the elevated train tracks drew parallel lines below the hospital cliff.

Gosh, I feel sticky all of a sudden, she told Goldie, and stopped to hitch her school bag and give her skirt a twist.

Oh, I'm always sticky, I'm so fat, laughed Goldie.

But it was something else, as she discovered when she bent down. She saw the red stain on her cotton drawers. She straightened up with a jerk. Goldie, I've got it!

They took hands and whirled in a circle. Now you'll know what I've been talking about, said Goldie, remember what I told you?

Gee, what will my mother say? I'm not even eleven yet. Addie didn't get it till she was fifteen. And I know when she gets it cause she gets so sick every month, she gets dizzy and vomits and goes to bed with a hot water bottle -

Why, asked Goldie.

I don't know, answered Beatrice, maybe cause she's so thin and can't spare the b-l-o-o-d. She shivered, thinking about it happening to her.

Goldie wrinkled her nose. What I don't like is washing the rags, she whispered.

Well, I won't, declared Beatrice, I'll just throw it away afterwards.

Oh, you'll need more than one. I have to change about three times a day.

You do?

Slowly the two girls crossed the street and started up the opposite hill, talking about what to do and what it meant and all about it. The monthly - by the time Beatrice got home, she felt years older. She was a real grownup now, as much of a young lady as Addie! Goodbye, baby, goodbye, childhood! Mama was alone in the house. Quietly, Beatrice asked for a clean white piece of sheet.

What for, asked mama.

You know, said Beatrice in the same quiet tone.

For a minute mama squinted at her, then came towards her. What do you mean?

That's right, I've started my monthly. Suddenly, a flame shot across one cheek; mama had slapped her. She gasped and was about to burst into tears when mama began to kiss and hug her, saying it was a slap in the face for good luck. Then mama

pulled an old sheet from the bottom drawer of the bureau and began tearing it into long strips, talking excitedly about becoming a woman, but Beatrice said she knew all about it and that mama didn't have to tell her what to do.

Imagine, not yet eleven, you poor child! And mama was crying as though to herself, and when Beatrice came out of the bathroom, she found mama's bed turned back and mama heating water in the kitchen just as she did for Addie, so Beatrice got into bed and stretched out luxuriously, happy at last to be Addie's equal. And then Mrs. Singer came in to ask mama about a cake recipe and Beatrice heard their voices drop to a murmur and she was furious with mama for not keeping the secret, and such a personal one, too, and while she was fuming about it, Mrs. Singer came in, staring and unbelieving, and then leaned down to kiss her, saying she hoped Beatrice would live a long, happy life as a Jewish woman, and then Beatrice felt better because it meant Mrs. Singer wouldn't treat her like a little girl any more, so it was all right.

Ben came in soon after and said, what's the matter, you sick? But when mama explained it was just a stomach ache, he shrugged. Oh well, I'll see you later, I got to practice over on the lots, so long. And mama and Beatrice winked at each other as he went off whistling.

With Addie it was different. Beatrice could hardly wait to see her. But mama got hold of Addie first and Beatrice couldn't hear what they were saying. Then Addie walked in and Beatrice pretended that nothing unusual had happened and didn't even look at Addie.

I don't believe it, said Addie, she's making believe.

What do you mean, said mama, don't be silly, I saw it myself.

It could be watercolor or red ink, she's so smart! Beatrice merely crossed her arms over her chest, satisfied to know what she knew. But it can't be, argued Addie, it can't happen to a girl of ten!

No, mocked mama, why, in Europe I know girls who started at nine, so what do you know about it?

Well, this isn't Europe and I don't believe her, that's all. She's trying to

trick us into thinking she's a young lady already, I know her! And Addie went off angrily, wondering what Beatrice was up to this time.

Somehow, mama managed to tell papa, too, and Beatrice thought she'd die of embarrassment. Why did papa have to know such things? When she got mama alone for a minute, she demanded fiercely if mama intended to broadcast the news to the whole world. Mama propped her pillows up, set a supper tray on the bed and said with a smile, why shouldn't I be proud to see my youngest grown up, it's a happy day for a mother, believe me.

But when Beatrice saw papa's face, she felt like crying, he looked so sad and quiet, though he didn't say anything; he just patted her head and stood there while, then walked away, swallowing hard. And so, after all was said and done, it was papa's silence that made the whole thing seem different, because it was that that made her realize what it meant. A new time and change again. And suddenly, it seemed less important to wipe out the difference between her and Addie than to lose something that had seemed forever.

It was even noticeable in school next day. What are you sitting on, exclaimed Mrs. De Vries, coming up the aisle to see.

Beatrice jumped up and backed against the window. Nothing, she stammered.

Mercy, you must have grown half a foot overnight, smiled Mrs. De Vries, I thought you were sitting on your books! I couldn't see Evelyn at all. You'll have to change seats, you two.

It caused some commotion because now Beatrice was right next to Dick. Dick looked around and grinned, then opened a book and looked very thoughtful, tapping a pencil between his teeth. It would be easier to pass notes to each other, without using betweeners.

And then spring widened the days to bright blue skies and June tripped lightly to its close. Will you kiss me goodbye, will you kiss me goodbye - the words hammered and sang, fretted and whispered. Mrs. De Vries was getting books collected and counted and put away; maps and charts were taken down and rolled up; walls and bulletin boards

were stripped; the children's work folders and drawings were returned; the morning surged forward on busy hands and ~~hurried~~ feet until the noon bell rang, then the lines moved evenly to the staircase and down. Beatrice slipped back to the room. Mrs. De Vries was removing her lunch pack from the desk drawer.

What is it, monkey, did you forget something?

I came back - I came back - oh, please, Mrs. De Vries, there may not be time later - will you kiss me goodbye? It was out, it was spoken, the huge bubble was released.

I'll miss you, too, said Mrs. De Vries and hold her close for a minute. Then she kissed her. There, but you mustn't say goodbye because I expect you to come and visit me sometimes, or will you forget me the minute you leave?

I'll never forgot you, not as long as I live, said Beatrice, and it was like a holy vow, solemn, binding. She walked away slowly, shaping her promise like a loving cup.

At the end of the day, Mrs. De Vries gave her a tangible souvenir; it was a colorful, illustrated history of the United States. As Beatrice walked home, clutching the beautiful big book in her arms, the tears shimmered against the sunshine, washing the street in waves that blurred the outlines of buildings, stores, rooftops. The last walk. She took the longest way home, wondering if her feet would ever move over the same concrete squares, stop across the same rocks and cracks again. How many times she fallen along the way, bruising her knees, cutting holes in her stockings? How many times! How many times had she walked the way from home to school, from school to home? How many years, months, weeks, days? Multiplied by, added to, divided by, subtracted from - it was the final arithmetic lesson of her grammar school days.

And Dick, Lester, Eva, Hattie, all her classmates, would she ever see them again? She called the roll, not wanting to forget their names, their faces. Little Otto with his shaven head and crooked teeth, big Miguel the fifteen year old Mexican boy whose voice was like a frog's, half pint Annabelle Critch with her frizzled curling-

iron hair - oh, there were so many linked to P.S. 40 days. Gentle Christine who could draw like an angel, stupid Amy who giggled at all her mistakes, mousey Beulah who could never do anything wrong... Mr. Lansing, Miss Dawson, Mrs. Kilpatrick, all the teachers, those she had had and those she hadn't, Addie's, Ben's... Goodbye, dear P.S. 40. Goodbye, childhood. Again and again, goodbye. And when she got home, she sat right down and wrote a long letter to Mrs. De Vries, thanking her again for the book, for the wonderful two years together, wishing her a happy summer... But the desperate urge to tell her what it all meant was not there, so she added a p.s., I love you, and because x's were supposed to be poor taste, she wrote it out, I send you a jillion kisses.

That year, as though summer had waited for the last day of school, the heat soared on the first day of vacation. For once there was no July 4th on the roof. The tin beach was too hot to walk on, stand on or sleep on. Papa came home from the office with his shirt clinging to his skin. Phew!

Tsk, said mama, it's like an oven day and night.

Ben sat around in his underpants, reading a baseball story. Can you beat it, wearing uniforms on a day like this? Ought to be a law allowing bathing trunks for summer games.

Addie fanned herself by the fire escape window, though mama had all the green window shades down. A girl could go crazy cooped up like this, with nothing to do!

Beatrice leaned her elbows on the aquarium. Fish are smart. Look at them. They should worry.

Then what are we hanging around for, asked papa, let's get the hell out of here, who has to burn up in the city?

What, so soon, exclaimed mama, why the summer's just starting! It'll cost a fortune if we go away now. You know it gets hotter in August.

Hotter than this, mocked papa.

Sure, said Ben, let's wait till we're crisp as potato chips and then go away. I want to swim right now!

Why can't we go to the mountains for a few weeks anyway, till the heat breaks, then come back and stay awhile and go away again in August, said Addie, we don't have to do it all at one time.

What do you say, Katie, asked papa.

You, you're always ready to jump as soon as they open their mouths, answered mama, we'll think about it.

Think, said papa, with what? And he went off to soak himself in the bathtub, while Addie and Ben started reasoning with mama, to help her think.

Beatrice grew glum. Addie and her mountains, she knew what that meant. As for Ben, he didn't have a chance, everyone was fed up with living in a beach bungalow.

It continued hot day after day, till mama agreed on two weeks in the Catskills, no more. And I'm not picking the fanciest, most expensive hotel, you hear? I'm not packing a store full of clothes, don't talk to me about shopping. We'll go just as we are.

But Addie managed to sneak in a couple of mornings with mama on the boulevard because, she said, how would it look to go anywhere with all of last year's summer things?

Ben went on reading, Beatrice plotting. And on the night before mama was to start packing the trunks, Beatrice pushed back her chair from the dining room table and stood up. Her speech was ready.

I've decided, she announced loudly and waited till she had all eyes, I've decided to skip my vacation this time. You see, papa's alone in the city during the week and I've decided to stay home and keep house for him. I'll make the beds, serve his meals, and be here when he comes home from the office. And you know I can do it, mama. Now, isn't that nice? And she sat down.

For a moment there was a stunned silence. Ben forgot the book under the tablecloth, Addie stopped chewing, papa set down his soup spoon and mama's mouth flew open.

Well, don't you think that's a good idea, demanded Beatrice. You'll save money on my hotel bill and papa will have someone to watch his pocket while you're gone.

Geez, what a kid, said Ben, plain goofy! And he bent down to find his place on the page.

Showoff, naturally, said Addie.

Honestly, began mama, not knowing what attitude to strike.

All right, eat, not so much talking, everybody, and papa went on spooning mama's chicken soup.

Fine, said Beatrice, I'm glad that's settled. Some water, please?

Oh yeah, just a sec, said Ben.

Better keep your eyes on what you're doing, said mama sharply. Ben stopped pouring just in time. And nothing's settled, you hear me?

Why mama, I thought you'd be tickled to have me look after papa.

Huh, mumbled papa, I can look after myself.

Are you fooling or what, Beatrice? What's come over you all of a sudden? Did you ever, a child wants to stay home in this heat!

Maybe it's gone to her head, piped Ben.

No, drawled Addie, she loves housework. Can't you see her sweeping the floors, dusting the furniture, cooking at the stove and washing dishes in the sink? I'll be sure to hire you when I'm married, I promise.

Married, you'll have a long wait, returned Beatrice.

Oh, I don't know -

Sure, they're standing in line, open the door and let them in!

Quiet, quiet, said papa, just eat.

That's right, agreed Beatrice sweetly, let's not talk about it any more. You know, when I make up my mind— She said nothing more till the end of the meal when papa picked up his newspaper. Papa, isn't it true that Miss Scott gets a two week's vacation every year?

Yeah, sure, anytime I say. His eye caught hers. Why?

Oh, I was just thinking, smiled Beatrice mysteriously.

Thought I smelled wood burning, sniffed Addie. Papa picked up his paper and rattled it behind chuckles.

What's so funny, said mama, coming in from the kitchen.

Oh, nothing, nothing, said papa and cleared his throat. Where are my glasses?

Coming, sir, said Beatrice, hurrying to get them from the top of the dresser. Here you are, Mr. Berger, anything else?

Thanks. He put them on and glanced at her suspiciously.

You couldn't ask for a more perfect secretary while Miss Scott's away, she said.

Addie burst out laughing and as quickly stopped. Now that's really funny! And she sailed off on another wave of ha-ha's.

I don't see you volunteering for the job, said papa.

Me? Why should I? And spoil a perfectly beautiful vacation, no thank you! Mama looked from one to another in puzzled dismay.

Oh, I may not be able to do everything Miss Scott does, admitted Beatrice, but then, some help is better than none, don't you think so, papa dear?

Forget it, baby, he said, you better go to the mountains with the rest of them.

No, I told you my mind is made up, and I think it'll be fun at the office, working for you.

Work, office, what are you talking about, interrupted mama.

Now mama, just relax, said Beatrice, everything is going to be all right.

Hm, wasn't it a certain party who said not so long ago that she wouldn't dream of going into business, who sneered at my going to secretarial school? Strange, very strange, declared Addie.

Oh, for two weeks I don't mind. It's better to earn a little money than to waste it, isn't it? Besides, I'm not the lazy wall flower type, excuse me, I like to be useful and do something with my time.

Say, why don't you two women shut up and let us men read, said Ben, straddling his chair and laying his book flat on the table.

Mama could not change the made up mind. Having accepted it, she began to advise Beatrice what to buy to prepare meals, how to keep an eye on papa at night.. Tell him you'd like to eat downtown with him, to go to a movie - you know. And she poked Beatrice in the ribs meaningfully.

Leave it to me, said Beatrice. I'll come up with him for the weekends, that'll be enough vacation for me.

You sure now, repeated mama, worried she might change her mind, worried she might not.

Sure, of course I'm sure.

Hm, I bet she'll be bellyaching before the week is out. Wait, you'll see, said Addie, she won't want to go back when papa leaves.

Oh yeah? Think I'm like you? And Beatrice sat down to make out the week's menus so that mama could see what a good balabusta she was.

She didn't go along to see them off on the train. She had work to do. She was sorry they had taken Teddy with them, but papa had said the dog needed to cool off. About an hour later, papa returned to pick her up.

Aren't we going to walk, she asked, alarmed at sight of the taxi waiting in the street. She could hear mama's echo.

What the hell, it's paid for anyway and besides I'm late, said papa and waved her inside.

She found Miss Scott's paper cuffs in the top drawer next to a box of rubber bands. She snapped them over her bare arms, then looked down and examined Addie's shoes. She liked the extra height of the cuban heels. Twice, she answered the phone. Who's calling please? She repeated the name and handed the phone to papa. He gave her sheets of figures and asked her to check their accuracy, then let her copy the Monday morning entries on a new sheet. Mr. Schumann came in some time later and smiled when he saw her.

Morning, said papa, I've added a new worker to the payroll.

And why not, replied Mr. Schumann, we can use more office help. Playfully, he pinched Beatrice's cheek. What do you think you're worth, hein?

I'll let papa decide, she answered seriously, and went on copying the orders and prices in her neatest manner.

O.K., Mr. Berger, you tell me at the end of the week. And don't be stingy, ya! He nodded jovially and went into an adjoining office.

Later, papa was called to the stables and she had the office to herself. A salesman came in and she leaned across the counter, perched on papa's stool, to ask if she could help. He said he'd wait. Please sit down, Mr. Berger will be back in a moment, she told him. He smiled and she felt that Miss Scott could have done no better.

Towards noon, papa sent one of the men out to get some lunch. It's too hot to go out and eat, baby, he explained, this way we'll get finished early.

There wasn't much to do in the afternoon, so Beatrice tried out the typewriter. She jabbed out a letter to mama with one finger and was pleased she had made no mistakes. Then she and papa walked home. Except for a few boys playing on the streets and an occasional wagon creaking along, the mid-afternoon seemed abandonned to a merciless heat. While papa undressed, she filled the tub for his bath. Afterwards, he slept and she propped her book on her knees and soaked in half a foot of cold water. About five o'clock she decided to wake him, remembering the two glasses of water and the domino sugar on each plate.

Thanks, baby, he said and hunched up and sipped the water while the sugar melted on his tongue. Again she was amused at the way his little finger crooked around the glass as though on purpose, to look genteel.

How did you break it, she asked and pointed.

Oh, some kind of kid stuff. Don't think I was always such a sissy, he said.

But it was hard to think of papa as ever having been anything but fat and bald, with womanish arms covered with light golden hair. She could not imagine he had

ever been a boy like Don, running, shouting, playing with a gang, fighting... When he noticed she was dressed up and still wearing Addie's old summer shoes, he made her change into sandals.

Please, papa, I really need a new pair of dress shoes, and since I can't wear Addie's, why don't you buy me my own cuban heels? Or I could buy them myself with the money from Mr. Schumann -

Hold on, not so fast, said papa, you haven't earned a pair of shoes yet! Just then, there was a knock at the door and it was the taxi man.

A taxi, thank heavens, thought Beatrice, relieved that they wouldn't have to take the long hot train ride downtown. She felt quite elegant stepping into it and waving up at Edna and Mrs. Weaver who were leaning out the front window watching. And when they got downtown, papa took her to a shoestore. Though the new shoes were not cubans, they were not so boxtoed and flat as her others, and they cost twice as much as mama usually paid. She hugged papa's sleeve when they left the store, saying he was the best boss in the world.

Just don't tell mama, he cautioned her.

Or Addie, she added, wishing Addie could see them that minute.

They ate in a restaurant that was new to her and she realized how important papa was on the lower East Side. The owner came over to talk with him and Beatrice felt very grownup to be sitting there with them. Then she and papa took a stroll down one of the main streets and papa stopped to see what was playing at the theatre. It was a Yiddish play, her first. But she didn't enjoy it as much as the plays she had seen uptown because she couldn't understand it all, she missed some of the humor and found the tragedy heavier on the actors than on her. In the lobby during intermission, she found the cigar smoke sickening and lost interest in the men and women to whom she was introduced. Papa must have known it was disappointing for her, so promised her a better evening next time. She fell asleep during the ride back and either the taxi driver or papa carried her upstairs, though she managed to get undressed and into bed by herself.

Henry let her ride with him on his morning round and it was fun watching the horse clop along in front of the wagon, knowing where to stop and when to start, as they moved slowly down the avenue to deliver bakery supplies. She liked Henry. He had a round Irish face and a happy smile. Sometimes he whistled as he lifted down the baskets and boxes and leaped to the sidewalk to deposit them in front of a grocery or bakery shop. Once, he let Beatrice hold the reins but the horse seemed to know because he kept turning around and stamping his hoofs. It was fun to see the tail swish under the high broad buttocks, though she felt embarrassed when the horse let out a yellow stream and dropped brown balls on the street.

Can't train them at all, laughed Henry, but that's all right, the street cleaner will soon be along. And Beatrice giggled, thinking about toilets for horses and dogs.

Papa must have forgotten his promise because he took her to visit the Martels that evening, but it was a good meal and Maxine was very sweet to her and later took her for a walk and an ice cream treat while papa and Jimmie played pinnochle. When she and Maxine came back, they found Mrs. Martel talking softly to her son in the kitchen and from the sulky look on Al's face you could tell he was in some kind of trouble.

I din't, I din't, ma, he kept repeating, looking anxiously at his sister.

I'm telling you, Al, this is the last time, said his mother, the next time I'll let your pa take care of it and he won't take any excuses, you know that. Al nodded, glad to end the inquisition. Lottie Martel sighed and turned to Beatrice. You ought to be glad you don't live in this neighborhood. Your mother doesn't know how lucky she is.

Then why don't we move, asked Maxine impatiently.

Ask your father, he has the answers, said Lottie, and shrugged her shoulders wearily.

On their way home, Beatrice asked papa what kind of neighborhood the Martels lived in.

59th Street? Used to be uptown in the old days, had the nicest people there,

but the elevated trains and trolleys changed all that. Pretty tough place now. Sure wouldn't let my kids run around it, he said.

So Beatrice knew why Maxine had held her hand so tight, running till they reached the corner, and then running back the same way. But she didn't ask why they didn't move because papa would probably answer it was none of her business.

She did some more work at the office next day and answered the phone, but it wasn't much fun any more and she wondered how Miss Scott could stand it day after day and why Addie should want a job like that, when there were so many other things to do that were interesting. But it was too hot to think what and she could hardly wait to get home to her book again.

That night papa said there was a meeting and asked Mrs. Singer to let Beatrice stay there, so she did and slept with Birdie, and in the morning when she went down to fix papa's breakfast she saw he had not come home and she wondered if she ought to go to the office anyhow. She swept and dusted and played house till eleven and then decided to walk there. If he wasn't at the office, she would go to the library and home for lunch. He was there but he sent her to the library and home just the same because he said there was nothing to do.

I'll fix supper tonight, papa, and then let's go to a movie, huh? He nodded and waved his hand. Of course she wouldn't tell mama about last night and since Mrs. Singer didn't know, papa's secret was safe.

They left early the next afternoon for their weekend in the mountains. Addie's letter told them the hotel bus would meet their train and bring them out from the station. Papa wasn't much company on the trip; he drowsed and slept almost all the way. Beatrice speculated about the motion of the train, how the landscape rushed past you, making the train seem to be running backwards, telephone lines widened overhead and drew together in the distance, houses slid down hill, fields opened sideways like a fan - it was an exciting game, motion.

Mama cried when she saw her. Because I'm so happy to see you, she said. Teddy leaped and barked, running from papa to Beatrice and back. Ben grinned and

frowned, feeling stranger-shy after a week's separation. He kept shuffling and fidgeting till they went into the dining room to eat, then he forgot that Beatrice and papa had ever been away, and everybody talked about the week's events. Addie sat very tall and straight, and soon Beatrice became aware for whose benefit. It came as a surprise to her that the young man seated with his mother by the window should be interested in Addie. Why, he was about twenty!

Will you stop turning around and staring, hissed Addie and kicked her under the table.

Why, can't I look around this hotel and see what it's like, asked Beatrice innocently, is there a law against looking?

You know very well what I mean, said Addie with threatening eyes, then threw back her head and laughed elegantly, as though at an amusing pice of news.

Ha, ha, ha, mimicked Beatrice, then slouched in her chair and said, you're nuts, he's not even looking at you.

Never mind, smiled Addie, patting her hair, I've had lots of dates with him. Beatrice craned her neck again and when she caught his eye, pretended to be examining the ceiling and floor. Like him, whispered Addie, but before Beatrice could answer, Addie nudged her arm. There's the boy friend I picked out for you. A moon-faced boy in knickers came striding into the dining room behind his parents and made a noise as he sat down and grabbed the menu.

Him, said Beatrice contemptuously, he's too young!

Mama, you hear that, laughed Addie, thirteen's too young for her -

Fine, said mama, I saw an old man with a beard, maybe he'll suit her, and she turned back to papa, repeating and-so, and-then, trying not to miss a word.

Well, Ben, said Beatrice, deliberately turning her back on Addie, and who's your girl friend?

Girls, huh, think I'm crazy, smiled Ben and broke into another roll, I'm too busy for girls.

What do you do here all week?

Oh, go fishing, rowing, swimming, stuff like that -

Where's the water?

Down the road - he jerked his head - kind of a lake.

Really, well, that'll be nice, will you take me rowing tomorrow?

Sure, only I got some guys rounded up for a hike, we may be off early.

Mama, called Beatrice, changing the subject, what's doing tonight?

Addie's eyes flashed mama a signal. Tonight, what's tonight, Friday, what do you think, everyone's tired, we're going to bed right after supper.

Addie, too, insinuated Beatrice.

Mama got mad. Addie, what's Addie got to do with you?

Snotnose, muttered Addie.

Did you ever, a ten year old compares herself to Addie!

Eleven, corrected Beatrice, but mama didn't care.

Addie's a young lady, ready to be engaged, should she go to sleep when you do? Or maybe you want to go dancing with the gray beard?

Papa pressed mama's arm. Do we have to start fighting as soon as I get here? Let's shut up and eat, we're not at home, we'll talk about it later.

Talk, thought Beatrice bitterly, a fat lot of good it would do. But she swallowed her pride. O.K., Addie, you win, where are you going with him?

There's a moonlight dance on the pier tonight, just for young couples, confided Addie. Boy, he's some dancer!

Will you tell me all about it tomorrow, asked Beatrice, gulping the poison and trying to look pleased.

Maybe, you never know, it all depends, said Addie mysteriously, going into another siren's pose.

Yeah, thought Beatrice, all moonshine and roses, with a hidden kiss here and there. And she looked at the moon-faced boy with repugnance.

But she changed her mind next day because there was no one else. She and the fat boy sat in the lobby and played dominoes. He was a good player and very fair, he didn't mind when she won. Then they went out on the hotel porch and talked about

school. He said he was going to be an engineer. It didn't sound very interesting to her, tunnels and bridges and things like that. Then his parents called him and he went off with a so-long, see-you-later, and she looked for something else to do but mama and papa were playing cards and Ben had gone off on the hike and Addie was nowhere in sight and there were only some corny magazines to look at and after she had read all the ads she went back to the porch. Just to think.

Sunday wasn't much better, except that there was even more to eat than usual. Mama groaned at every course but went right on eating because, she said, that's what they were paying for, and if she bust, she wouldn't think of sparing the owner one cent. If I don't eat it now, they'll probably give it a fancy look and serve it again tomorrow. This way, let them buy fresh stuff. For what it's costing a day, I could feed us a whole week at home.

Afterwards, nobody could move, but papa insisted on a walk. A walk before to build up your appetite and a walk afterwards to digest it, that was his motto. But first mama had to go to her room to let out her corset. They met Addie's young man as they were coming back to the hotel and he asked if she would like to go for a walk, and though Addie had complained the whole way that her feet hurt and that she was tired, she turned right around and went off with him. What a hypocrite!

Mama wanted Beatrice to stay. So did papa. They were so ungrateful for her sacrifice that she was tempted to stay just to teach them a lesson, but she let her better nature get the upper hand. Besides, the fat boy was leaving and she'd have nobody then. Even Teddy was too busy to play with her.

I've got a lot of office work to do, she explained, and besides, who'll take care of the house and fix papa's meals and everything? Remember, he'll have nothing to do when he comes home from the office! Who wants to come home to an empty house?

So she returned to the city with him. A hard rain had broken the heat spell and it was pleasant walking back and forth from the library during the week to exchange books.

My, you're a fast reader, said the librarian, seeing her face so frequently,

would you like to borrow four books at a time? The rule is two for two weeks but since you like to read and take good care of books, I'll make an exception in your case.

Beatrice took two extra Marjorie books. When she finished that series, she started a new one. She liked those stories about girls growing up into young ladies, telling about their school days and vacations. It was all so different from her own life. Girls who lived in small towns and on farms, who visited wonderful aunts and cousins, who had true-blue friends and exciting adventures... Her diary was about the stories. Her own day she summed up in one line at the bottom of the page: office - library - bath - miss Teddy. But she got a good chance to talk to papa and to ask him lots of questions. Till now, she had learned about the past only from mama, so it was interesting to hear things she had never heard before. How he left home when he was fourteen and became a salesman. How he attended concerts and operas in all the big cities he traveled through. How he came to America as a young immigrant... But papa didn't like to talk about himself. He preferred to tell her stories of famous men, Jews who had become great: a Spanish physician, an Italian composer, an Arabian mathematician, a Dutch philosopher, a German poet, a British statesman...

Just remember, if you have some of the best blood in the human race running in your veins, and if you have any brains or talent, that's why.

It was terribly exciting, to think about that. No wonder she loved to dance, gypsy blood! And the way she could tell what people were thinking and make good guesses about them, somewhere a fortune teller! The way she walked, what Mrs. De Vries called poise, royalty of course! How she loved to solve problems, to get down to facts, to argue the truth - for each thing, she could thank some great person. Maybe her blood was full of great people! In a way, it frightened her, that they might all be mixed up and living inside her, fighting over her, each trying to shape her brain, to tell her what to do... But the feet was pleasure, too, and she laughed, feeling her heart beat loudly and her breath stop in her throat. No, I'll be Beatrice, not them! They had their chance, they died, now it's my turn!

But she really tried to hear their voices when she got into bed and hugged her pillow, knowing she was safe with papa in the house. To hear their voices, to imagine their faces. Oh, if she could see them, hear them, find out how and where they had lived, what they had learned. If she really knew all that was in her blood. It seemed so precious, that life's blood, she thought it must be a little what God felt, God who was everybody, who saw all, heard all, knew all. Oh God, I thank you for my life, for the blood in my veins. Help me to hear, to see, to know, dear God, help me to live -

It was her summer treasure, her eleventh year secret, because being Beatrice Berger meant being many, many people, people who lived long ago, in all countries of the world. And now it was her turn. She felt they were watching her, listening to her. Because she was alive. And somehow, because she was, a part of them was alive, too, in her. It was terrible, it was wonderful, this knowledge. To carry all times and places locked up like that, inside! And the others, did they know? Did they carry their secrets locked up like she did, a secret which one opened only at night, alone, kneeling at the window and looking up at the stars or whispering into one's pillow with no one by?

Then papa told her about other members of the family who had settled in Turkey, in Egypt, in Arabia, in Palestine, and that started another thread to winding. What if there was another Beatrice, born on the same day, who looked just like her? And she imagined herself walking in a strange land, wearing the dress of that land, speaking the language of that land. The same blood, the same thoughts, the same tears and laughter, dreaming this minute of her! Some unknown cousin who was living her life far away. Would they ever meet? And if they did, would they know? How much closer they were than twins? Because look at Paul and Polly Reynolds, they were not the same. And just having the same father and mother didn't make children the same, because look at Addie and Ben, how different they were from her.

She looked at her library books and frowned. If she could get mama and papa to tell her all the stories they knew about the family, about all those who had

lived before and all those who lived in other parts of the world, no story book would begin to compare! But mama and papa didn't have time for stories, and the way things were, it was all she could do to dream her own or read them in books, because the family was home again and there was no more privacy, even when she tried to stay in the bath, to linger on the toilet, or to shut out the noises when she went to sleep.

Waking was another birth each time, coming back to life. Sleeping was a little bit like death; the taste in her mouth told her that. It was a mouldy taste and the smell of decay assailed her nostrils each morning. Especially in summer, when the air was still. Summer was death. To stay in bed was death. She jumped up and ran to the bathroom to get rid of the smell and taste of death. Her rinsing and gargling and splashing could be heard through the whole apartment. When she emerged, her face polished, her mouth and throat clean, her hair combed to a shine, she would stretch, wanting to laugh and sing. Alive once more!

Why aren't you more quiet, reprimanded Addie, you sound like a truck! It's a wonder you don't fall apart, such gargling! And at breakfast they huffed and puffed in each other's faces to see who smelled better.

Maybe you like to stink, I don't, said Beatrice, phew!

Ladies don't make any noises when they get washed, said Addie, nobody can hear me!

Go on, I bet you don't even get washed! Look how yellow your teeth are. Mine are white as pearls.

My, don't we love ourselves, snickered Addie.

Mama came into the kitchen in her nightgown. Some day, God forbid, she'll split her throat with all that tearing and spitting and coughing. Addie's right.

Sure, Addie's always right, I know. Beatrice left them. Say, pop, how about a nice walk before it gets too hot?

O.K., baby, you can walk part way with me to the office, said papa, tucking the shirt tails over his bulges and fastening his belt.

Beatrice flicked her tongue at Addie as she sat down to breakfast. Addie promptly returned the compliment. Yix, shuddered Beatrice, all vinegar and sour pickles!

He likes it, shrugged Addie, helping herself to a piece of herring.

Who's he, that little shrimp Gus Linder? Even I wouldn't be seen with him, dead!

Oh well, there are some things you're too young to understand -

You mean necking? Pshaw, what's that? Beatrice embraced herself and made kissing sounds. Addie gasped and pointed to mama. Aw, she doesn't know what we're talking about. While mama was frying eggs, the two set up a pantomime on necking, till Addie was rollicking with laughter.

Stop, you're making me itch all over, she shrilled. Mama brought the egg platters to the table.

Now that's the way I like to see two sisters play, she said, talking nice and having fun together. I wish it was always like that.

See what I mean, said Beatrice. Mama, what's passion, what's necking, do you know?

Pash-pish, neck-shmeck, you go to school to learn, I don't need to know. The girls doubled over, pointing at each other and howling.

What's the racket, what's the racket, boomed Ben coming in, rubbing his hands. Gangway for a hungry man! And he dived in to what was left on the table.

There was a lot of politics talk that year. Papa said Harding would never be the man that Wilson was. He was disappointed; he said the party needed a new leader, someone like Al Smith.

Too bad he's a Catholic, he told Mr. Hartman as they were sitting around the table one evening, cracking nuts and sipping wine. They're afraid to run him for the White House, afraid of the Pope. Foolish in this country to worry about a man's religion. If he's good enough for Governor, I don't see it. He'd make ten Hardings.

Make a good president all right, agreed Mr. Hartman.

He may not talk like a professor but he knows his stuff, man! He's got a good head on him and a big heart. Up from the Lower East Side right to the top -

Got to hand it to him, nodded Mr. Hartman. Made a success of himself.

Why good Lord, the people love him! He's a good mixer, plays a good game with the boys, doesn't hold back a favor - The two men sat on, talking.

You know, like Horatio Alger, said Ben. Beatrice listened, wondering what it was all about. Politics - she frowned. Mama didn't seem to know much about it either.

It's like a game played by boys' clubs, she said indifferently. I should worry, let them play. There were more important things for her to think about. Addie in business school, Beatrice in junior high - Politics, who cared? Except that papa was looking happier these days, saying there was a boom on and that prosperity was just around the corner. He wasn't going downtown as much as before and mama said he was a reformed man. She kept hinting about his promotion and once she whispered something to Addie and Addie looked very impressed but they wouldn't tell Beatrice or Ben anything about it.

Betcha I'll be driving a car one of these days, said Ben, chewing on a pencil as though it were a cigar.

Addie snorted behind her hand. Who'd give you a license?

Oh yeah? I look older than you, huh!

And when papa heard about it, he shook his head and said, you never can tell.

See that, hooted Ben.

Go way with your nonsense, said mama, a car, that's all we need, people would think we were crazy.

I should worry what people think, said papa, as long as they're not paying for it.

What kind of car, pa, asked Ben eagerly, you have to know something about

these new cars before you buy one. I can name 'em all for you.

Mama sat there, arms crossed high on her 44 bust, grimacing at papa. Talk, go ahead, talk, talk doesn't cost anything. Heh,heh, better you should put some teeth in your mouth, you haven't a good one left.

Papa sucked on his upper lip, trying to hide the wide gaps. I'll chew with my own as long as they last and when they fall out I'll chew without them.

Oh pa, said Addie, you'll look like an old man -

Who cares, sang Ben, so long as he brings home the bacon! And then started to sing My Old Man. When he got to Number Six, everyone yelled for him to quit.

O.K., laugh, sing, have fun, finished mama, but don't let me hear any more about cars. Wait till we have some money in the bank, a house of our own, a maid and a cook and a butler, then I'll be ready to listen. A car, did you ever!

Beatrice went to see Mrs. De Vries the first day of school. The junior high girls were dismissed early; they went to their home rooms, received their class schedules and books, then reported to a general assembly where they heard about school rules, school uniforms and school ideals. She was a dwarflike creature, Miss Ward, like a barrel on stilts, without a neck. Her voice was a screech trying to be heard across the large auditorium. She had red hair tied into a knot on top of her head and the girls slumped in their seats to smother their giggles and to pinch each other's hands. Beatrice decided she did not like Miss Ward in the least. As for uniforms, she positively writhed. Middy blouse and skirt, sailor tie, serge bloomers for gym! Addie would split her sides laughing.

She got off the trolley in front of P.S. 40 and hurried up the familiar stairs to Mrs. De Vries' room. At the door, she hesitated, then knocked. When she entered, she saw a strange group of faces staring at her. Not one she recognized. Mrs. De Vries had already started the 4A work. The blackboards were covered with lessons and she was flashing drill cards from her high chair by the window. She interrupted herself for a minute to shake hands with Beatrice, then told her to sit in the back of the room till she was finished. Looking around, Beatrice felt

how long ago it was since she had been in 4A. Her face and hands burned, her eyes denied that this was her beloved teacher. Why, she acted as though she had always been <u>their</u> teacher, as though she had never belonged to a class with Beatrice, Eva, Hattie, Lester, Dick... She was doing the same things for these children that she had once done for them! It was almost too much to bear. But she sat and waited, clinging to the hope of a smile, a look that would tell her it was all right, that Beatrice was still her favorite. It was only when the bell rang for the noon dismissal that Mrs. De Vries noticed she was there. Then, when the children were dismissed, she stretched forth her hands and told Beatrice how much she had grown during the summer, and didn't these seem like babies to her now? But despite loyalty and sentiment, Beatrice realized things had changed. Even the way Mrs. De Vries wore her hair was different; the braids which had circled her head like a crown were now combed straight into a bun at the back of her neck. Her glasses seemed more conspicuous, the blue eyes not so bright as she had remembered them, comparing them to corn flowers. She hated herself for noticing these things, stubbornly declaring that she was unhappy to be in junior high, that she wished she were still in Mrs. De Vries' class, and that she would return to see her every day as soon as she was out of school.

Oh no, you mustn't do that, my dear! Mrs. De Vries looked alarmed. I'll be very busy! And you, Beatrice, you'll have all your new work to do. But thank you so much for remembering me, and do come again at the end of the term and tell me how you've made out, won't you? I know you'll be a fine student and make straight A's. Goodness, algebra and civics, you'll be so smart! And Mrs. De Vries saw her to the door and shook hands again and Beatrice went away feeling puzzled, hurt...

When she came out of the building, she crossed the street and waited at the corner for the trolley to take her home. It meant another fare but she couldn't bear to walk home the old way again. She had said goodbye in June. And nothing she could do, mattered. She had gone, the others had gone. New children had taken their places. It could never be the same again. You could paste the torn sheets

back on the calendar, turn back the months, the years. The clock ticked, the earth turned, round and round moving. But I don't want to change, she cried desperately inside, I mustn't change! The fault, the blame, lay somewhere. Why hadn't the others come back to see Mrs. De Vries? How could they go off and forget like that? They had said they loved her, and where were they now? And Mrs. De Vries, ready to dismiss her, telling her to come back at the end of the term. Then she didn't miss her, didn't need her! Why was she the only one with a remembering heart? Why?

It took a few days to get used to the new regime. Miss Raymond, her room teacher, also taught 7A algebra. She had a jutting lower jaw and a lisp, but she seemed very kind. Beatrice wasn't sure she could ever love Miss Raymond because love took time, but she was a good teacher anyway and Beatrice wanted to work hard for her. Miss Frick, the history teacher, was something else - her voice harsh and cruel as a man's, her pointer ever ready to pounce on someone's head or bang against the desk. Miss Frick believed in dates. History meant names and dates. If you memorized a dozen every day, you were a good history student. The girls dreaded going to Miss Frick's class. But it was gym and assemblies that were the worst. They marched. It was like a reformatory. Every teacher was a guard, watching, scolding, tugging. Miss Ward was the warden and small as she was, everyone bristled in her presence. She was the law, the high and terrible power in her kingdom that was school. She wore a whistle on a ribbon around her shoulders, but she did not use it often. When she did, one shrill blow stopped all motion. Every one became a statue. The teachers stood in fear of her as much as the girls, and Miss Ward knew it. She was as friendly as a spiny cactus, though she prided herself on having an Irish sense of humor. Beatrice failed to see the joke even when the girls burst out laughing as at a signal. Since she couldn't do anything about Miss Ward, she ignored her as much as possible. School lost its glamor.

Papa bought the car for Christmas. It was a limousine Paige, complete with chauffeur in livery. Ben walked round and round, whistling at her sleek lines, the gleaming metal, the shining black paint, the high wheels.

She's a pip, pop, a beaut! But you didn't need a chauffeur, I could learn to drive her easy.

Yeah, well, wait till you learn, I don't want you to practice on this car. Get your mother and we'll give her a try.

Mama refused to come down until she was dressed for the part. A chauffeur, no less! Then, when she did stage her appearance, she kissed papa, took one quick look and got in, as nervous as a fly on a wedding cake. Mama, papa and Addie sat in the back seat, Beatrice and Ben faced them on two folding seats. Behind the slide window sat the chauffeur. The Paige moved down Carlton Avenue.

Just like the movies, whispered Addie.

Papa sank against the cushioned seat, nodding proudly. This is just the beginning. God willing, we'll have everything that goes with it.

Mama held on to the window strap rigidly. In the front mirror she could see the chauffeur's cap. Once or twice she tried to speak, but the words wouldn't come out. Finally she caught papa's eye. Can he hear, she gestured nervously.

So what? Talk Yiddish, I should worry. I pay him, don't I?

How much?

Relax, Katie, relax, it's cheaper than a cab.

Cheaper, sure, I bet. Her hands felt the upholstery. A fortune, I bet. She heaved a big sigh.

What of it, I'm a partner in the business now, ain't I?

Pa, you mean it? Geez! Ben's attention was torn from the driving mechanisms.

I've known about it a long time, boasted Addie, haven't I, ma?

We should never know from a kinnahurra, said mama, and gave three small spats over her shoulder.

Oh don't be so superstitious, ma!

Superstitious, you hear? Did you see them when we left? I thought their eyes would fall out of their heads. When Mrs. Singer looks inside, she'll faint. And mama kneaded her cheek anxiously.

A partner in the business, that means we're rich, thought Beatrice. He's a swell guy, that Mr. Schumann, isn't he, she said aloud.

The best, said papa.

God grant him a long life, murmured mama piously.

I think I've caught on now, said Ben, and he showed Beatrice how to drive a car.

Where are we going, asked mama, peering out at the strange landscape.

That's all right, he knows his business, I said a nice drive.

Don't you know where we are, mom? We're going up towards Yonkers where the rich folks live.

Mama sat up still taller. In her seal coat, white gloves and veiled hat, she had nothing to be ashamed of. I'd like to see a nicer family anywhere, she declared.

But what Beatrice remembered about the drive was the parkway lined with stone cottages and smoke trailing out of chimneys and green hedges and Christmas wreaths in windows. Some day, she thought, some day ...

They went driving every day during the holiday and a few times Ben sneaked in some extra rides alone with the chauffeur. You bring me a good report card and comes your next birthday, papa held up his hand and nodded.

Geez, pa, I'll study night and day if you promise to let me drive!

And one Saturday, papa took Ben off with him and when they came back Ben had a driver's license. It was easy, he scoffed, nothin' to it! I told the guy I was seventeen and psst, it was over!

Yeah, but did you see what I stuck in his hand when I thanked him, said papa.

Aw, you didn't have to bribe him, pa, I drove that Auburn like a dilly!

Auburn, what Auburn, asked Addie suspiciously. Ben guffawed and papa stroked his face. You mean we got another car? Oh ma!

Ah, an old jalopy, explained papa, one of the boys at the office picked it up for me real cheap. Now it's all right, Katie, I know what I'm doing. Think I

want Ben to practice on the Paige? The Auburn's fine for a run about. And when he gets more experience, he can be our chauffeur, see?

Shame on you, spluttered mama, a fifteen year old boy driving a car. Why can't you learn, you so old and fat already?

Not for me, said papa, I haven't time to learn, and he went in to lie down for a nap.

See, that's what happens to rich men, said mama, they can't do a thing for themselves. Soon he'll need someone to untie his shoes.

So the Auburn became the every day car and the Paige arrived by appointment only.

Like the story of the apples, mama said, trying to be reasonable about it. There was this farmer who had a wonderful crop of apples. Each apple was more beautiful than the next one. Big, red, shiny, juicy apples. He packed them in barrels to be sold at the market and kept one barrel in the cellar for himself. Everyday he went down to get himself an apple, but each time he looked for the one that seemed most ready to spoil. He didn't want to see any of them wasted. Day after day like that, an apple that was squashed, an apple with brown spots, a wrinkled apple - you know.

O.K., said Beatrice, and what happened?

What happened? Well, happened that by the time he came to the last apple, it was also a little bit spoiled. So from all his wonderful apples, he didn't get to enjoy even one!

How stupid, said Beatrice.

That's why I say, better to enjoy the best while you can. After, who knows? And mama heaved a big sigh. I can tell you plenty of stories like that, foolish people who saved and saved and went without and went without, till they were so old they couldn't enjoy anything. What for, will you tell me?

The next step was inevitable. Having two cars was too much for Carlton Avenue.

My God, how long do we have to live in this dump, asked Addie, I'm ashamed to invite any of the girls here. And how do you expect me to meet the right kind of fellows in a neighborhood like this? Don't you want me to meet some rich boys who can afford to take me out and show me a good time? I'm almost eighteen, don't forget.

Look, Katie, we have some new furniture, said papa, why not put it where it belongs? We've lived here eleven years, it's time for a move.

But Max, rents have gone up so high. When we got married, we paid six dollars a month.

Sure, but how long ago and where was it?

Fourth Street was very nice in those days, said mama with dignity, we had four big rooms and -

Sure, with one bath on every floor, I remember.

Well, didn't we move to the Bronx after Addie was born? And we paid ten dollars a month then. That's when you were a street car conductor.

A street car conductor, exclaimed Addie, astonished.

Ah, don't listen to your mother. The men went on strike almost as soon as I got the job -.

All right, conceded mama, a ticket agent for the subway then. It was just luck. That's how you met Mr. Schumann, remember? He gave you a ten dollar bill to change and walked away after you had counted out just one dollar, so you called him back to get the other nine and he gave you a job as a bill collector.

Just like Abe Lincoln, said Ben.

Why drag all that up, said papa, annoyed, we're talking about moving.

That's what I was saying, then we moved here and jumped to thirty dollars a month. Believe me, that was a lot of money those days, and with three children -

But look what you got, a steam heated apartment. Did you want to stay in a cold water flat forever?

Who's saying no? So why should we move now? The Sampsons put in electric

lights and everything.

Everything, what everything, demanded Addie. Look at that old stove and ice box, I haven't a room of my own, we don't have a parlor - what kind of home is that? Carol, you should see her house! I told you what it was like. With an elevator and a doorman. An entrance like a palace. The whole apartment furnished with rugs and drapes, a beautiful parlor set upholstered in plush, and her bedroom, oh boy!

You see, argued mama, it's not enough just to move and pay maybe fifty dollars a month rent. No, she wants what Carol has, no less. Maybe they're millionaires! And have they got a limousine and chauffeur, too?

I don't know, grumbled Addie, she rides to school in the subway just as I do, she isn't spoiled.

Then don't you be. Such fancy ideas, did you ever?

It wasn't a palace with an elevator and doorman, but after 350 Carlton Avenue, it seemed as good as one. It was a new house in a new neighborhood in a new division of the West Bronx right off the Grand Concourse and it did have an entrance through a courtyard. It was 1923, said papa, the great year for real estate; like a growing boy outgrowing his clothes the city of New York was being refitted.

Wait, you'll see some changes in the next few years that will make little old New York seem like a hick town in comparison. Lord, I can remember! And papa told them how the city had been only thirty years ago when he had arrived from Ellis Island, when uptown had been anything above the Battery, and how the city had pushed further and further uptown little by little, with more streets and more buildings, more trolley car tracks and more trains, and how it was still pushing -

So all right, said mama, it's pushed, but where can it push now? For me this is far enough, I feel like I'm out in the country we're so far uptown!

For you, said papa, what do you know? They haven't even started, I'm telling

you. The Bronx is still half empty lots and wooden houses. And look at Brooklyn and Queens and Staten Island. You think New York is just lower Manhattan? Like night is day!

So what do you want, for the whole world to move to New York? For my part -

For your part, interrupted papa impatiently, for your part the world could have stopped a hundred years ago! No use talking to her, a village in Roumania or the upper Bronx, it's all the same to your mother.

Is that so, trilled mama indignantly.

I don't really like the hill much, said Addie wistfully, forseeing the daily trek to the subway in high heels and galoshes, shivering under her wool coat.

Gonna be a long ride to my high school, pop, said Ben doubtfully.

Why, you can drive me to the office and pick me up after school, can't you?

And when it snows, demanded mama.

We'll put chains on our wheels, said papa, you think the city shuts down when it snows?

And what about me, challenged Beatrice, if you think I'm going to keep on at that cockeye junior high, you've got another guess. I'm going to transfer!

All right, we'll see, said papa.

Means losing a term, warned Addie, you can do the 7th, 8th and 9th in two years if you're smart. Rapid advance, you know!

Beatrice gave her a dirty look. So I'll get to high school when I'm thirteen, that'll still be a year ahead of you, dumbbell.

All right, said papa sternly, cut this out, I can't stand around all day while you're making up your minds. Shall we take it, Katie, or not?

You haven't told me the rent yet, reminded mama, looking out the front bedroom window which faced the street from the first floor. Maybe it'll be cheaper on the third.

Now mama, exploded Addie, you promised not to take another apartment in the rear. I want to see the world for a change. And there's no elevator, remember.

Well, repeated papa, we've looked for a week, are you satisfied or aren't you?

Oh, it's very nice, admitted mama grudgingly, parquet floors and all tiled bath and frgidaire and everything, but how should I know if you won't tell me the rent?

Who pays the rent, you or me? He was getting angry now.

Well, if you're sure we can afford it, hesitated mama.

How many banks have I robbed?

So it was agreed at last and they went to the office and papa signed a year's lease and the manager said they could have one month's concession if papa paid the first and last months' rent in advance. When mama heard it was seventy five dollars a month, she almost sank through the floor.

At least see if he'll give us two months free, she groaned on the side, even if you have to slip him a little.

Laughingly, papa told the manager that there was a woman for you, wanting two months' concession, and the manager said, why not, I don't blame her.

So mama grew coy and said, well, what about it, a lease is a lease, after all, and you're getting two months' rent anyway -

The manager scratched his head and looked down at the floor. Well, what the hell, it's a new house and you're the first tenants, maybe you'll bring me luck.

So they shook hands all around and mama congratulated herself all the way back to Carlton Avenue, saying it took a woman to know how to deal with these crooks. But her triumph was short because when she sat down to figure out all she needed to buy for the new house, she blamed papa for tricking her into the move.

We need a living room set and another bedroom set for the girls, besides rugs, drapes, lamps - Her cheeks looked like ripe tomatoes.

And me, growled Ben, where do I park?

Poor sonny, clucked mama, maybe next time we can afford three bedrooms. Ben chewed on his tie, knowing it meant the folding cot again.

Cheer up, said Addie, I don't have a room to myself either.

You see, complaints! No one's satisfied! We ought to stay right here. It

isn't enough the rent's seventy five dollars a month, they want four bedrooms, no less!

Since they were going to move at the end of the month so that Beatrice could transfer in time for mid-year promotion, mama decided that there wasn't time to hook the rugs herself. But she insisted on making the new curtains, drapes and lamps, and when she wasn't shopping with papa in the downtown stores, she was cutting, sewing, and embroidering. Thank goodness we don't have to worry about wall paper!

Did you notice each room has a different color plaster, asked Addie and they talked about the color scheme for each room.

The whole neighborhood knew they were going to move and everyone stopped to ask mama all about it. Afterwards, mama would report what each one had said.

Can you imagine? Mrs. Hill! I only wish we had all the money we've put into that grocery store these eleven years. I bet they've saved a million dollars by now. So Mrs. Hill, she says how nice some people make a success! And they pay thirty dollars rent, poor things. But Mrs. Hartman says I'm right, that she's going to get off this street soon, too. I wouldn't be surprised. Who will Frank have to talk to after papa leaves? As for Mabel Singer, she says she hopes February never comes. Will she miss me! We've been good friends. She can't bear to see me going up in the world while poor Herman goes on struggling and struggling. Isn't it a shame, when he has such rich brothers? Each one a multi-millionaire. I wish I had their money, believe me, I wouldn't let a brother of mine lift a finger, not a finger!

What about Uncle Nathan, teased Beatrice, they live worse than we do.

Mama looked up from beading a rose on a lampshade and frowned. That's different. Papa and Nathan are only half-brothers. And besides, Nathan has grown sons and daughters who are married, let them support him. Don't forget papa worked hard to get where he has. Who helped him? Nobody. Can he help it if Nathan is a dumb ox? What's he ever done to get ahead? A push cart peddler, some job for a married man!

Maybe he can't help it, said Beatrice.

No, it just proves that all wives are not the same. That fat, lazy Ethel, do you think she cares? Not her. Sits on her behind and lets the cockroaches crawl where they will. Such a housewife, pooh! Did she ever sew for her children and clean and cook and bake, like me? I'd like to see her embroider a lampshade or crochet a bedspread. Don't talk to me of Nathan. Please.

Leaving school that last Friday was not hard. Though Miss Raymond said it was too bad because Beatrice was the best algebra student she ever had. But you'll be a good pupil wherever you go, she added kindly. Are you sorry to go?

For a minute Beatrice didn't answer, then she saw the crinkled eyes beneath the iron gray hair and she shook her head honestly. No, only your class.

Miss Raymond smiled sympathetically. What didn't you like?

The school.

Well, I hope you'll like your new one, said Miss Raymond and she patted Beatrice on the shoulder in a sad, friendly way.

It was hard to resist the impulse, though she hated to say goodbye again. But she had to see Mrs. De Vries, to tell her that she was moving. She waited this time until the children left the building and then went upstairs. Miss Carey and Miss Hunter were there, seated on some pupils' desks. The door was open and Mrs. De Vries called gaily for her to come inside.

Here's my good old faithful, she laughed, do you remember Beatrice? Of course they did and asked if she had been promoted. For a few minutes they chatted with her about being in junior high and then Beatrice told Mrs. De Vries about moving.

Let's see, that will be Hammond's district -

Probably P.S. 39, said Miss Hunter, I know Frances Moore teaches up there.

A grand neighborhood, said Miss Carey, I'm sure you'll be very happy there.

I wish I could have stayed in P.S. 40, said Beatrice whimsically.

Isn't she a funny duck? Mrs. De Vries hugged her. Now don't you forget us, I want to know when you graduate and start high school!

Oh, said Beatrice quickly, I'll be back to see you long before then! And then wished she hadn't because they all laughed and Mrs. De Vries said that it wouldn't surprise her.

Mama scolded her for being late. There were two men in theapartment, taking notes as they went around looking at the furniture. With all we have to do to get ready, you had to stop to see a teacher! All right, so it was Mrs. De Vries, go see if I left anything in the wardrobe closet, they're going to take the old furniture out in a minute. That is, if they pay us good prices, I don't intend to give it away free. And mama went back to haggling with the men about the kitchen table.

Beatrice found Teddy lying under her bed. He looked miserable, his eyes hurt, his tail still, his nose warm. What's the matter, Teddy boy, did you think everybody had forgotten you? And she kissed and cuddled him while he lay shivering against her. Yes, even Teddy knew they were moving, that a change was in the air. Dear, dear Teddy, she murmured comfortingly, we aren't going to leave you behind, you're coming with us. He whimpered and licked her face. Did the bad men scare you? It was strange to have them walking about, looking at everything. She held the dog while she examined the drawers, telling him they would soon have a new house with new furniture and that it would be fun to smell new walls and floors -

And then at last, the apartment was empty, the old furniture taken to a second hand store in a wagon, and the rest loaded into a moving van. Mama checked everything with the truck driver: the trunks, barrels, dining room pieces, the framed picture of the fish, the two canary cages, the aquarium, the piano which had been hoisted down to the street through Mrs. Weaver's window - reminding him to be careful, to see that everything was covered, that she didn't want anything broken or scratched... And then papa drove up in the Paige and there was more checking, more talking.

I left Addie and Ben at the apartment, what's taking so long?

But mama still had to say goodbye to everyone, so Beatrice slipped back into the empty apartment, locked the bathroom door and gave way to tears. As though all the years had suddenly marched out of the house, she felt completely, uncontrollably deserted. Her house, where she had lived since she'd been a baby; the tub where she'd taken so many baths, been bathed by papa, rocked by mama; the toilet where she'd spent such happy hours reading; the sink against which she had measured her growth, now reaching the faucets, now standing on tiptoe to clear her elbows, finally seeing herself in the mirror to brush her teeth and comb her hair - She knew every tile on the bathroom floor, each crack in the window, each design in the room. Here mama had washed clothes, laboring over the washboard, lifting the heavy sheets out, carrying the metal container and climbing the steps to the roof. Here Ben had floated his toy boats, Addie had dyed a dress, they had given Teddy his baths. Here papa had kept his duck. She could remember no other bathroom; this was where she had gone from diapers to button pants to bloomers. Here was where she had played with Birdie and Edna and Elsie, whispering secrets, giggling over jokes. And it was only the bathroom - She couldn't bear to look in on the other rooms, her bedroom, the kitchen, the dining room, mama's bedroom, the view of the lots from the fire escape window, the view of the alley where the apartment houses backed on one another, the hall - More than eleven years in this house, a whole lifetime! The memories of this house - From gas light to electricity, the changing wallpaper from year to year -

She heard mama's voice calling, rising, falling, climbing. Hurriedly, she splashed water on her face, looked around for a towel, remembered, and tore some paper off the roll.

I'm coming, she yelled, I'm coming, then took one last parting look in the mirror, bent down and kissed the floor goodbye and hurried out.

Goodbye, goodbye... Faces blurred, separated, came together, drew apart. There was Mrs. Brooks, the candy store lady, with her buck teeth and sharp nose, a tiny figure in a red sweater and cap, moving behind the frosted windowpanes.

The butcher shop, the Hill's grocery, Mr. Kaplan's fruit store, then Carl's house, his mother's grocery, Mr. Golding's barber shop. Across the street, the graystone private houses. People came and went, shook hands, wished them luck, told them to come back to visit. Old Rabbi Cohen was giving papa a bottle of wine and papa was nodding about another order. Mrs. Adams kissed mama, thanking her for all she done, for being so kind. Mrs. Singer, Mrs. Hartman, Mrs. Goodman - the neighbors came with their farewell presents, trying to laugh, to hold back the tears, teasing each other.

Don't worry, they won't bury me on Carlton Avenue, promised Mrs. Singer.

God forbid, echoed Mrs. Hartman. It's all right, we'll all be leaving soon, we won't stay here like greenhorns forever.

You'd think I was going to Europe, said mama.

Where will she go to play poker, if not here, joshed Mrs. Goodman. Someone else came up with a cake. Beatrice caught a glimpse of Pearlie's mother.

What'll I do with so much to eat, wailed mama.

To sweeten your new house, said Mrs. Linder, her watery eyes red. So you won't bake for a week. You'll have enough to do.

Clinging to the fringes of the farewell group were the boys and girls, the children of these neighbors, the friends of Addie and Dan and Beatrice, the younger ones who had arrived in later years, some still in carriages. Goodbye, goodbye.

You'll come back and play with me, asked Birdie.

Of course, and you'll visit me, said Beatrice doubtfully. Edna and Elsie stood on the stoop, eyeing her nervously. Mad, glad, quarrels and make ups, all was forgotten. Childhood's circle was breaking; one of them was leaving. Goodbye. Papa and mama called her. She got into the car. The moving van started, it was to follow the Paige.

Wait, remembered Beatrice a moment too late, where's Teddy? Mama, I gave him to you! Wait -

Shah, shah, I know. He's all right. He's staying overnight with Mrs. Singer.

Mama pulled her back against the seat and the car moved ahead.

But why? We've never left Teddy before - A strange agitation took hold of her. She turned to papa. Why did you leave him? It was still a question, not an accusation, her bewilderment too sudden to be anything else.

He'll only be in the way of the moving men, baby, said papa, better leave him till we get settled a bit.

But papa! He won't understand! He'll think we've gone away and left him for good! Her sense of panic rose as she pictured Teddy barking desperately above the street, in the rear of a third floor apartment. Oh please, papa, please, we can't do that, please let's go back and get him!

Tsk, sit still, said mama, tugging her sleeve, don't be so foolish, you'd think he was God knows what. He's only a dog. Didn't you see how sick it made him, all the moving of furniture and everything? He's better off where he is, not under everybody's feet.

You're just saying that, cried Beatrice, you don't want him anymore now that we're moving into a new house, I know!

Mama shrugged. If I had my way, you're right. I love Teddy, too, but after all, a dog in a new house - Papa interrupted sharply, saying something in Roumanian. Hoo, so what? Did you ever, a child making such a fuss over nothing!

He's not nothing, hiccupped Beatrice, he's our Teddy!

Shah, shah - mama's voice grew soothing, she drew Beatrice to her and wiped her face - did I say Teddy wasn't coming with us? After we get moved and everything is settled - her voice went on assuringly, promising.

Addie and Ben wanted to ride right back and get Teddy, they were so upset, but mama got angry and said there was enough to do without that and put them both to work at once.

It was dark by the time the piano was installed. Mama had her brass candlesticks ready, her head covered with a white cloth. She lingered over her sabbath prayer, pleading for a special blessing on the new house. Then they sat down

to a light supper among the barrels and talked about where to put things.

It took the entire weekend to unpack and unload. Of course mama did most of it because only she knew where everything had to go. So papa and Ben took time to walk about the neighborhood and explore it a bit, while Addie and Beatrice fixed their room. Mama seemed happy enough, she sang as she papered the kitchen shelves and tacked gay strips of oilcloth along the edges. Every once in a while she called to the girls to come see how the china closet looked, the cut glass, the silver serving pieces. Through the large, blank windows, the world outside wore a naked look; an intermittent sun shone behind gray skies. In apartment 1A at 1400 Wallace Avenue, the radiators made a cheerful hiss.

They compromised - Addie took the dresser and Beatrice the vanity table, which she promptly converted into a desk by placing her diary in the upper drawer and her books in a row against the mirror. Mama and Addie thought it looked better covered with a scarf and a vase, but Beatrice relayed those objects to the top of the chiffonier and there they remained. The clothes closet was roomy and for the first time, they could measure the extent of their wardrobe. It was quite plain that Addie had many more hats, shoes and dresses than Beatrice did. As the closet gradually filled, the evidence became painfully embarrassing. Finally, Addie broke the silence.

Well, they'll all be yours soon. When I get out of business school, you know - the suggestion dangled on the last hanger.

You mean it, Addie? Will I really get all your things? Possession shifted, envy became pride.

Hm, well, most of them. There was a note of disdain in Addie's voice and eyes; possession gave way to boredom.

By Sunday evening, the rugs were laid, the furniture in place, the empty barrels removed to the cellar by the hearty Italian janitor and the family ready for its first evening in a parlor. Papa had selected an album of Caruso and Galli Curci for the opening program on the new radio phonograph. He leaned back on the

rich, handsome sofa, the ankle of one leg resting on the knee of the other, his gaze on the ceiling, his arms outspread, listening to a reciprocal music, his own as well as the other. Beatrice curled up at one end, careful to keep her shoes off the upholstery. Ben sat squarely in one of the big, stout club chairs, a comfortable hand on each rounded plush side. Addie sat in the other chair, looking sweet and demure as she played with the tasselled cord that hung down from mama's new beaded lamp. Mama came and went restlessly, stooping to pick up a thread, straightening the frame of the underwater fish painting, moving the lamp slightly forward or back according to her view of it... then she brought in a straight backed chair from the dining room and sat down facing her family.

Moo, she asked, breaking into the aria.

It's swell, mom, said Ben.

A real home at last, said Addie.

I can't get used to it, said Beatrice.

You like, asked mama squinting up at the ceiling light. Papa sucked in his cheeks and nodded, letting the aria go. She reached for the wall switch; the overhead light went out, leaving the room in the softer light of the lamp.

Atmosphere, sighed Addie, what a place for parties.

God willing, you should have a hundred boy friends, said mama.

Just one good one, that's enough, corrected papa.

What do you say we dance, suggested Ben, come on, Bee, lesson one. Beatrice ran to get a jazz record.

On the new rug, asked mama uncertainly.

Oh ma, said Addie, you don't expect to roll it up every time we have a party, do you?

What then, make holes in it right away? It only costs four hundred dollars!

Papa looked at his pocket watch. Well, time to turn in.

What, cried Ben, at nine thirty, the evening's young, and he caught Beatrice and whirled her around clumsily.

Not like that, called mama, not like that, lift your feet, you're not playing

soccer!

Ah, let 'em have some fun, said papa, but remember, school tomorrow! And he went off, winding his watch and yawning.

It was hard to make Ben lift his feet. Beatrice tried to lead him, to push him. Don't be so stiff, she repeated, put your arms this way - not so tight, I have to breathe. Look, like this, like a box, one-two-three-four, see? He staggered, leaped, fell back, stepped on her feet. He began to perspire, trying desperately to keep time, keep moving. Then he sat down and watched Beatrice lead Addie. It's easy, watch, you just float, close your eyes, make your feet follow the music... He tried again and stumbled and fell against the sofa.

It's too small in here, I need more room, he grumbled.

Wait till you go to a nightclub and dance on a dime, said Addie.

Look who's talking, scoffed Ben, what do you know about nightclubs?

Oh, plenty, plenty, said Addie mysteriously, I've been around, and she went into the dining room and sat down at the piano bench. Mama rolled out the folding bed from the closet and showed Ben where to set it up, reminding him to set the four coasters under the wheels so that they wouldn't leave a mark on the rug.

Beatrice waited till everyone was through with the bathroom, then she went in and stood there. The bright newness of it hurt her eyes, the gleaming whiteness, the chromium fixtures, the shining tiles. Her new bathroom. Where her life was to start over again. What would she see in this house? What changes? Eleven years old till how long? She looked at the tub - what books would she read in there? Oh the thoughts, the dreams, the hopes and plans she would share with this room! And no one would know, no one. Only these walls, these tiles. Be good to me, she whispered, leaning her cheek against the cool wall. Be faithful, she whispered, stroking the tiles with her toes. She walked solemnly to the mirror over the wash basin. She stared at her image, focussing on the two white spots in each dark orb until she could see the intense, radiant promise. Her lips moved softly. I, Beatrice Berger, you, we - she nodded at herself, agreeing -

we must never forget, never change, no matter what happens we must always be true, always remember. Being rich doesn't matter, having a new house doesn't matter - she spoke slowly, emphasising each word carefully - but this, being Beatrice inside forever and ever, remembering my life, that matters most of all. By this sign, remember - and she clasped her hands as though in prayer, looked once more beyond the features and the hair and the skin, deep into the tiny crevices that opened into her mind and heart and soul, let the promise sink in, then said goodnight and turned out the light. In bed, she offered up a prayer for Teddy, snuggled close to Addie, and was asleep by the time mama had finished checking the door lock and windows and given one last pat to each dark head.

Papa and Ben left the house with Beatrice, pointing out the corner where she was to start to school, the two streets which she was to cross before she reached the Grand Concourse - warning her of the traffic - and the two she was to follow on the other side. Ben drove the Auburn slowly, showing her the way to school.

You sure you know how to get back now, asked papa as she got out.

If you forget, just ask, said Ben. She nodded and walked away, having insisted on registering at the office by herself. They waved and Ben drove away.

It was an old building, not too unlike P.S. 40 and Beatrice took her transfer card to the clerk behind the counter. After a few questions, she was told to go to room 14. It was the 7B1 class and her teacher was Miss Phillips. The girls and boys were just lining up at the door and Beatrice took her place behind a girl who said her name was Louise Stanley. She seemed a nice, friendly girl though she had bad, chipped teeth.

That's my brother, whispered Louise, pointing to a tall blond boy.

In the same class?

We're twins, tittered Louise behind a rough, chapped hand. His name is Bobby.

At a bell signal, the class entered the room and Beatrice took her record card to the teacher at the desk.

New girl? Well, that's nice. I see you've made good marks. We can use some competition this term. Miss Phillips was a fat blonde lady with a serious face. She was nicely dressed and had a big diamond ring on her finger. She gave Beatrice a seat, making a boy move back. He gave Beatrice a shy smile and she thought he looked like Dick; he had the same narrow eyes.

The work seemed easy. She went through the lessons with familiar studiousness. There was a brief morning recess for games in the yard. When it was time for lunch, she waved goodbye to Louise and skipped to the corner.

For a minute, she was baffled. It didn't look like the same street she had seen from the car. She looked right and left, made up her mind and hurried to the Grand Concourse. By the time she had crossed it, she knew she was lost. She looked down the forked streets and felt a strong knock under her ribs. What if she was late the first day? She ran another block along the Grand Concourse. The tall skyscraper building looked utterly unfamiliar. She ran up to a lady coming out of the street door and explained that it was her first day in the neighborhood -

Wallace Avenue? Dear me, I'm afraid I can't place it. So many new streets are opening hereabouts. Look, there's a policeman, why don't you ask him?

He was three blocks away. Beatrice ran. When she reached him, all she could do was stand there and pant.

There, there, he said kindly, what seems to be the trouble? She told him. Well now, that happens to all of us sooner or later. Wallace Avenue, sure, I don't blame you a bit. It's these confounded double streets that zigzag every which way cause all the trouble. He walked along with her, explaining. Then he showed her how to remember which way to go.

Thanks very much, she repeated gratefully.

Sure, any time, that's what I'm here for. You'll get used to it in a few days, you look like a smart girl. Goodbye - and good luck!

Lost - she didn't tell mama that. Instead, she asked for Teddy as soon as

she came in.

You heard papa say he'll bring him this afternoon, how's school?

Beatrice told her about it quickly, wolfing down her food. She wanted to get back before she forgot how. It worried her all afternoon, but at three o' clock, she found she had remembered. There was another girl crossing the Grand Concourse at the same time. Beatrice hailed her and told her it was her first day at the school. It seemed they lived near each other. Fritzie, the girl called herself.

Fritzie's short for Fritzhoin, she said. I don't like my real name, Pauline. And I'm in 7B2 because I'm just a fat old dumbbell.

Oh no you're not, answered Beatrice, glad to have found a friend. She liked Fritzie's bold talk and Fritzie was a big girl of twelve.

My pop's got the tailor shop down the hill, said Fritzie as they skipped along to Wallace Avenue.

I live here, said Beatrice when they reached the apartment house on the corner.

Jesus Christ, you must be rich, said Fritzie and continued skipping without saying goodbye, her coat flapping above her tall fat legs. Beatrice watched her with astonished eyes until she disappeared.

She did her homework at her desk, wanting to keep her new notebooks neat. She ruled margins, numbered the pages, checked her examples, studied her words... When she had finished, she took out her diary. She had not written in it since the family had moved from Carlton Avenue. But the move was not yet complete, there was still Teddy. She hesitated, then put it back in the drawer. She would wait.

There was no Teddy with papa when he and Ben returned. Beatrice rushed to the door and stopped, her words cut off by Ben's dark scowl and papa's avoiding eyes.

Ah, he was sick, pop took him to a vet. Ben walked past her roughly. Mama searched papa's face questioningly.

Yeah, I thought he needed a check up. Change of weather, you know. A tonic should fix him up.

Really sick, asked Beatrice faintly, wanting to accept papa's vague, matter-of-fact report.

Oh, he'll be all right in a few days.

Mama bit her lips, stifling her protests. A dog hospital, no less, with a day and night nurse to hold his paw. Expense, nothing but expense. She went back to the kitchen, fretting.

A few days, thought Beatrice, then he was sick, and she felt a growing anguish. Nobody felt hungry and supper passed in what amounted to a record silence. Once or twice mama made a feeble attempt at a joke but no one laughed. When the table was cleared Ben sat down to do his homework, papa read the evening paper, Addie absorbed herself in the Love Story magazine, Beatrice practiced softly on the piano. From the kitchen came the sound of water running over dishes. Later, they played cards. Mama and papa played casino at the kitchen table, the children played fan tan at the dining room table. Gradually, a warm air of forgetfulness settled over the cards and coins as the games alternated each one's luck. Voices and laughter rose and the evening ended on a note of optimism.

Will you go see Teddy today, papa, see if he's all right? It was her first thought in the morning.

What can I do, the vet knows his business -

I'll go, volunteered Ben, I'll get a pass my free period.

And be picked up for playing truant, no sir, said mama severely.

I'd go, if I didn't have a typing test today, said Addie.

Doesn't Teddy count at all, flared Beatrice, her nostrils quivering, I told you we should have taken him with us!

What's the excitement, reproved papa, it isn't the first time I've left him at the vet's. I'll look in on him after lunch. And with that small consolation, everyone finished breakfast and went off to meet the day. Except mama, who had

her own schedule worked out at home: to straighten the house, to shop and compare prices in the local stores, to fix Beatrice's lunch and the family's supper, to finish the bedroom curtains... Then there was still another lampshade, the damask drapes, the crochet work on the doilies and scarfs... Would she ever get back to her Carlton Avenue poker games? She could hardly wait to invite the women to her new house.

Beatrice heard the story the third night. Addie was doing her stenography, Ben his Latin translation. Mama and papa were talking quietly in their bedroom. Beatrice tiptoed down the foyer and listened, suspicious, keeping herself hidden behind the partly opened door.

But Max, I never heard of such a thing -

Yeah, that's what Mrs. Singer said. It was some night.

You mean he scratched at the door and cried all night? Imagine -

I'm telling you, Katie, it made me sick. You wouldn't know him.

But how can a dog go blind like that? You're sure the vet can't do something? The door flew back and Beatrice showed herself, her eyes transfixed, her face drained of color. Mama's expression was terrible to see. Papa sucked in his cheeks, his eyes watered and he turned away. Beatrice, baby - a dry, husky whisper tore from mama's throat.

Beatrice backed away. She didn't have to hear more. She ran to her room, threw herself on the bed and broke into excruciating sobs of weeping. Addie and Ben came running. The news became official. Over and over, mama repeated the story, saying it was impossible, how could it be, she had never heard of such a thing.

Geez, stammered Ben, geez.

Addie began to whimper, her breath rising on a shrill scale. Papa blew his nose violently.

Even his paws, not a nail left, imagine -

My God, wailed Addie.

In one night, can you beat it, choked Ben, you should have seen him -

It just shows, even a dog -

Yeah? What about Grandpa's dog Rosh, shrieked Beatrice from the next room. And Teddy wasn't just any dog, he was our Teddy!

They didn't hear her, they went on talking and grieving without her. She didn't care how she looked, she went in to join them, her hair dishevelled, her face contorted, her eyes swollen.

Will he die, she sobbed. The words tripped naked from her tongue, quivering.

Sh, don't say that, pleaded Ben.

My God, soared Addie.

Papa caught his breath and blew into his handkerchief again.

Stop it, commanded mama gruffly, I won't have it, you hear? You'd think, God forbid, it was someone in the family!

He was, moaned Ben. Sweet little Teddy -

We loved him, shrilled Addie. Look how long we had him!

Boo, and didn't I love him, too, challenged mama, who looked after him every day when you were all away? Answer me! She stood there, defiance and guilt struggling on her face.

All right, all right, said papa quietly, no one's blaming you. It was just something that happened unexpectedly. We'll get over it.

Never, shouted Beatrice. If he dies - she squeezed her knuckles against her mouth. Ben's shoulders shook shamelessly, Addie's tears flowed unchecked.

Stop it, thundered mama. Who's talking about dying? A dog's strong, healthy, tough! In a week, two, he'll be good as new again! Tell them, Max, isn't it true, tell them what the vet said!

Papa met the lie squarely. There was no use pretending. What good's a blind dog?

You see, whined Addie, oh my God -

Geez, pa, you can't let them kill him! We'll take care of him, honest!

Oh pa - Beatrice ran up and seized his arm - please bring him home, I must see Teddy again! Maybe if he knows he's back home with us, he'll get better, oh please, pa!

Papa stroked her head. They're doing everything they can, baby, everything they know, believe me. He's a sick dog, you mustn't expect -

Max! bellowed mama, seeing the situation escape her hands. If this keeps up, I'm going to leave the house, you hear? Look at them, all of them! They'll get sick and blind themselves, God forbid - and all over a dog! That's a fine way to start the new year in a new house, I don't think! Did you ever? Pooh, pooh, pooh, may this fall on my enemy's head! And she spit in three directions.

In the end, papa promised to bring Teddy home. Mama was too exhausted to argue against it. Having a sick dog around could be no worse than having three sick children.

But just remember, he's a dog, she repeated futilely. And to distract Beatrice, who was waiting, she remembered another story. Once upon a time there was an old lady. She had lived a long life, had many children, and now was all alone, her husband died. So she went to live with one married son and daughter after another, but everywhere she went she was unhappy. Nobody had time for her, nobody wanted to listen to her. This one was too busy, that one didn't pay any attention, the children laughed and ran away. An old lady, what do you think, what could she do, poor thing? So she went to the rabbi and told him that if she didn't have someone to talk to and tell her troubles, she would die. She had so much on her heart and mind that if it couldn't spill out of her mouth she would simply die, that's all. He was a wise rabbi, that man, he thought and thought about it. He felt sorry for the old woman and sorry for her children and their families. He knew how it was with people and life, he hadn't studied so many long years for nothing. So you know what he told her?

Beatrice blinked dully, her mind a blank of everything but Teddy.

Listen. He said, go, old lady, and find a big rock. You hear? A stone, a big one. Then he said, take it down to the cellar, understand? Take the stone down to the cellar and put a chair next to it. And every time you feel like talking, go down there and sit and tell your troubles to the stone. Like that, you hear? Of course the old lady was terribly surprised. Why should the rabbi tell her to do such a thing, to hide in a dark cellar and talk to a stone? But what could she do? She knew he was a wise man, that he wasn't trying to make a fool of her. She respected him and she obeyed him. Well, you know what happened? It's true, listen, here comes the main part. Well, about three weeks later or who knows when, the old lady came running to see the rabbi. She looked crazy and scared to death. Rabbi, rabbi, she screamed, a terrible thing has happened! The rabbi led her into his house and made her sit down. Compose yourself, old lady, speak calmly, he said, the world is older than either of us and will be much older in time to come. But the stone, gasped the old lady, the stone! I was talking to it just now and it cracked in two! And she told how while she was talking to it in the cellar, she heard this splitting sound and that all at once the rock fell apart at her feet. How could it be, she asked, almost out of her wits. So the rabbi quieted her and then said, isn't it better that our troubles should crack a rock than break a human heart? So you see, sighed mama, the rabbi knew. So you mustn't keep everything to yourself and worry so much about Teddy. After all, he's only a dog -

She didn't want to go back to school. The shock of seeing Teddy was awful but to leave him was even worse. Beautiful Teddy! His white silky fur now limp and sticky, his eyes filmed over with a milky cloud, his tail lifeless, his nose hot and dry, his paws bandaged. He didn't seem to know any of them. He just lay on his pillow in a corner of the kitchen, shivering, taking long deep breaths. He refused the food offered to him and dribbled the water inserted into his mouth with a spoon.

Oh Teddy, Teddy, murmured Beatrice, please get better, please don't die.

We didn't mean to leave you, we didn't mean to. It's me, Beatrice, can't you remember, can't you hear me?

She went only because it was Friday, test day, then hurried home to him. Mama sighed and shook her head, her forehead bound with a cloth smelling of vinegar. Papa stalked in and out of the kitchen, home early and unable to sleep. Addie and Ben took turns sitting by Teddy and stroking him. It was the gloomiest Friday the Borgers had ever known.

Teddy died in the morning. Addie stayed in bed all day. Ben found a clean wooden box in the basement. He placed Teddy inside on his pillow and papa carried the box under his arm. Beatrice watched them bury the little coffin in the adjoining lot. She wore her black patent leather shoes and a black satin ribbon around her wrist. Nobody said a word. Then papa and Ben returned the shovel to Mr. Da Pino who said he was a very sorry for the poor leetle dog and patted Beatrice mournfully on the head, and then she went upstairs and papa and Ben went for a walk. She walked past mama and into the bedroom, not looking at Addie. Then she sat down at her desk, drew out her diary and painted the dated page with shoe black. Opposite it she wrote, Teddy died. Then she took off her black satin ribbon, tied it around her diary, locked the drawer, and leaned her head between her arms and cried. She would never write in her diary again. Carlton Avenue was dead, Teddy was buried, the past was done and gone, and she, Beatrice, could do nothing about it. For some reason, God had let her down, Time had betrayed her. She felt lost again, like a cork bobbing out at sea, not feeling the tug of a line, unaware of anything but drifting. The waves washed around her, drowning the past, obscuring the future.

And then it was tomorrow and tomorrow and school began again and a new family moved into 1400 Wallace Avenue and now she had Rhoda Byron to play with and Fritzie and friends in class and Morty was passing her notes every day and it was Now and she still had mama and papa and Addie and Ben and she began taking piano lessons

from Mr. Ernest again and Saturday mama was taking her back to Carlton Avenue on a visit. Addie had an appointment downtown and papa and Ben drove off early to New Jersey in the Paige. Papa had dismissed the chauffeur and junked the Auburn, so mama took Beatrice by train. And after the visit to Carlton Avenue, Beatrice knew what she had to do. It came to her as a relief. She could hardly wait. As long as she had left the thing undone, she could have no peace. It was like trying to keep one foot on shore and the other on a boat, unable to stay or go. So she untied her diary, turned back to the January pages where she had left off and began to tell about the move. She listed all the names connected with her farewell to the past, including all she remembered from P.S. 40, the few she cared to remember from the junior high and then all those she had known on Carlton Avenue. There were friends, neighbors, storekeepers... She forgot no one. The crippled doctor, the sweet potato man, the ice man, the postman, the gas meter man, the street cleaner, the police man, the librarian, the insurance man, the wine maker, the jewelry salesman, the laundry collector, the nurses, the neighborhood idiot, the blind man, the milkman, the peddlers... Page after page, the list grew, steadily, calmly, purposely. Faces summoned up names, names recalled faces. And then she was through, the long list done. She stood up and stretched, smiling to herself in the mirror. She had recovered her bearings. It was her chart of identification. The ship of self steadied, knowing its compass point, its port of embarkation. The list was the chain of her anchor, sounding the fathoms, giving her the dead reckoning at journey's start. She faced the open sea, ready for the ship's new log.